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Editorial: settler colonialism in the late neocolonial stage

Luccas Gissoni¹ Freedom Mazwi²

Kwame Nkrumah (1966) famously developed the category of “neocolonialism” as the “last stage of imperialism” to highlight the systemic transition from formal colonial rule. At this stage, imperialism has retreated from direct political domination of the periphery, but at the same time it has developed a wide array of mechanisms designed to deny the peoples their recently acquired sovereignty. In this way, monopoly capital, in association with the imperialist powers, continues to control, from the outside, the economic and political structures of the newly independent states. Thus, for the periphery, neocolonialism is a dialectical negation of colonialism, for it overcomes it and preserves it. Nkrumah also argued that neocolonialism conditioned the emergence of the so-called “welfare state” – based on “high working-class living standards and on a State-regulated capitalism” (Nkrumah, 1966, p. 255) – in the core, as well as as to “support a huge and ever-growing burden of armament costs” (Nkrumah, 1966, p. 267). This permitted the reproduction of the arrangement by which imperialism exported early capitalism’s social conflict from within the core to the international stage.

It must be noted, before we continue, that the reproduction of capital – contrary to what Eurocentric Marxism has affirmed – has always been based not only on the cycle theorized in the first seven parts of *Capital* volume 1 (Marx, 1976[1867]), which presupposes that capital reproduces its own conditions of production, but also on mechanisms described briefly in the eighth part of Marx’s magnum opus. Under the “so-called primitive accumulation”, the conditions of production are not reproduced, but extracted,

expropriated, or plainly stolen at the expense of nature and gendered or racialized labor, especially in the periphery of the world-system. Marx himself never pretended that capitalism was based exclusively on the cycle of reproduction, but only meant to show that, even if it was, labor would still be paid according to the value of labor power and not for the value it produces. And, in that sense, we should recall that Rosa Luxemburg (1951[1913]) could not explain the expanded reproduction of capital without accounting for primitive accumulation as a permanent structural force, especially in the colonized world.

Thus, even before the welfare state cum liberal democracy was built in order to neutralize social conflict in the core and conscript Northern labor as a partner in colonial exploitation, imperialism was always already integral to capitalism. By the time the various nationalist movements started to gain ground in the periphery, after the Second World War, monopoly capital faced the problem of sustaining the colonial “drain of surplus” (Patnaik & Patnaik, 2021). Neocolonialism emerged as a solution in which imperialism accepted decolonization, but at the same time managed to reproduce the drain of surplus in this new stage. Simultaneously, the welfare state started to be built out of that drain. This produced negotiated transitions in most countries, in which the ascendancy of local elites and of more moderate groups was facilitated by imperialism (on this, see also Cabral, 1966; Fanon, 1965). In other countries, where more radical movements gained power, imperialism intervened in an effort to control the situation, as with Patrice Lumumba’s

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assassination in the Congo and the coup against Nkrumah himself in Ghana. On the whole, the imperialist powers prevented the realization of more radical versions of pan-Africanism and managed to balkanize most African and Asian nations.

The welfare state dates back to the very beginning of the neocolonial transition. Although the latter has provided conditions for the existence of the former, there is contradiction, for decolonization ends up undermining the welfare state's equilibrium. Eventually, monopoly capital dismantled the welfare state, giving birth to the later phase of the neocolonial regime, as distinguished by Yeros & Jha (2020). Under early neocolonialism, notwithstanding the continued extraction of surplus value and even when the newly independent states sided with the ex-colonial powers, there was a “nationalist momentum” and a “commitment to social and democratic development” – with some states being “sufficiently radicalized to retain substantial autonomy and sustain an anti-imperialist posture in the spirit of Bandung” (Yeros & Jha, 2020, p. 86). In late neocolonialism, which is the peripheral political “correspondent” of the neoliberal phase of liberal democracy in the core, this space for maneuvering is denied. Therefore, when US-led imperialism is unable to control countries through the international system of trade and finance, it resorts to direct armed intervention which reduces them to a semi-colonial state.

By de-regulation of international capital flows and de-localization of production, capital lowered the value of labor power and offered the working class in the core a higher level of consumption even though wages stagnated and their gap with productivity has been ever growing. This late neocolonial social contract kept the profit rates high in the context of decolonization, and while it slowly dismantled the welfare state, it managed to avoid social conflict in the core via access to consumption. The flip side of the coin, on the periphery, is: super-exploitation of labor

(Marini, 2022[1973]), especially rural labor; expropriation of social reproductive labor, especially women's and non-whites' (Bhattacharya, 2017; Mies, 1986; Ossome & Naidu, 2021; Prasad & Yeros, 2024); land grabbing and expansion of the agricultural frontier (Moyo, Yeros & Jha, 2012; Moyo, Jha & Yeros, 2019); and predatory use of (cheap) natural resources and depletion of land via green revolution, which uses petroleum-based fertilizers to postpone this effect as long as possible (Ajl, 2021; 2023; Moore, 2015). These characteristics start, nevertheless, to make way into the core, especially via immigration, which has been erasing the relatively homogenous racial and social character of central capitalism's societies: they have unleashed the process of internalizing colonialism.

Another issue pointed out by Nkrumah is the dangerous character of neocolonialism and the possibility of imperialism expanding armed interventions, conflicts and wars. Here, he was almost visionary. In late neocolonialism, according to Yeros & Jha, imperialist aggression has taken hold across whole regions, leading to what the authors see as the return of “semi-colonialism”, as theorized by Mao (1939) for the “century of humiliation” China. Building on four “trajectories” of peripheral states originally developed in Moyo & Yeros (2011) – “‘radicalized’ states, which have entailed a certain re-run of the Bandung type of anti-imperialism; ‘re-stabilizing’ states after crisis, by the return to the fold of the monopolies; ‘fractured’ states which lost their territorial–bureaucratic cohesion to armed rebels and warlords; and ‘occupied states and peoples’, which succumbed to imperialist war of aggression” (Yeros & Jha, 2020, p. 88) – in 2020 the authors begin to see the last two trajectories as “the modern-day semi-colonial situation”, entailing “a specific pattern of accumulation based on extra-economic force and on exchanges not accounted for by the market mechanism” and “partial seizure of territory by means of war of aggression, the imposition of unequal treaties, the stationing of

military forces and exercise of consular jurisdiction within the territory” (Yeros & Jha, 2020, p. 88), among other characteristics underscored by Mao.

Also, the late neocolonial situation has been accompanied by the advance of fascism. Samir Amin argues that all fascist regimes have two characteristics in common: they are an extreme way employed by monopoly capital to govern modern capitalist societies in their interest, and they are based on a categorical rejection of “democracy”, replacing the practices and principles of the latter for “submission to the requirements of collective discipline and the authority of the supreme leader and his main agents” (Amin, 2014, n. p.). This second characteristic entails a process of legitimation which values the “race” or the “nation”. Together with the first characteristic, this has led Yeros & Jha to deduce a third one, namely that “fascism is a force in the imperialist drive for world domination”, and if “classical European fascism, under the prevailing imperial sovereignty regime of the time, consisted in a categorical rejection of national sovereignty among peripheral regions”, in today’s late neocolonialism, “monopoly capitalism has exceptional means to contain national sovereignty and need only suppress it sporadically” (Yeros & Jha, 2020, pp. 89–90).

Yeros and Jha, nonetheless, point to a novelty brought up by the neocolonial stage today, which is the rise, in some countries, of peripheral fascism. The latter’s characteristics are its limitation to national or regional disputes, its alignment with monopoly capital and its link to generalized semi-proletarianization. The second characteristic gives peripheral fascism its role in imperialist drive for world domination in spite of the first characteristic. With that in mind, we can ask ourselves about the specific paths of peripheral fascism in the former and current settler colonies of the periphery. In those countries, the tendency to racialize groups, “where-by exaltation of one group implies the subjugation and segregation or extermination of the other”

(Yeros & Jha, 2020, pp. 89) – in other words, its “avowedly supremacist” character – that the authors have pointed out, become even more important than in central fascism. The reason is that if, in the latter, racism serves the purpose of legitimizing internal authority and the external colonial drive, in settler colonies it legitimizes the internal colonial drive, apartheid, and “the escalation of primitive accumulation under the neoliberal assault” (Yeros & Jha, 2020, pp. 90). Therefore, the situation in which internal and regional disputes serve as a spearhead of imperialism in the periphery, with white settlers as proxies, are here embedded in the very social formations from their beginnings. Even in India, a country with no settler-colonial background and one of the major cases of peripheral fascism today, supremacy has taken hold, and its government’s proximity with Israel – the world’s current most intense case of settler genocide – is symptomatic.

These countries did not make their neocolonial transitions in the 1950’s and 1960’s, and did not share the Bandung nationalist ideals, remaining in “settler-colonial mode of political domination long after obtaining juridical independence from the British or Iberian metropolises” (Yeros & Jha, 2020, pp. 86). In these cases, the authors say, the neocolonial transition was only permitted by the settlers, already in the late neocolonial stage, under neoliberalism. As we have argued elsewhere while analyzing the Brazilian case (Gisconi, Macedo & Carvalheira, forthcoming), the settlers had contradictions with both the colonized and with imperialism, which is the reason why they organized development projects that sometimes confronted the latter, while internally escalating primitive accumulation – upon which their mode of accumulation is structurally dependent. In such a situation, any development project is acceptable only in a very authoritarian political situation, designed to repress any attempts by the colonized to take over power. Therefore, the neocolonial transition, which entails sharing power with the

colonized, had necessarily to be conditioned upon the abortion of what we have called the “national-settler development project”: this “nation” was for a few.

The outcomes vary. While in the radicalized state of Zimbabwe there was a transition to majority rule, but also agrarian reform, virtually ending settler colonialism, in South Africa only the former happened, with the settlers maintaining the basis of their economic power. Similarly, Venezuela appears to be erecting a solid anti-settler political edifice, with partial agrarian reform (Schincariol, 2020), while Bolivia is experimenting with plurinational state form. In both cases the settlers have tried to reverse the political situation, but have been ultimately defeated, at least for now. In Ecuador, meanwhile, the settlers have succeeded. The situation is different for Brazil and most of Latin America, where transition to majority rule has been very limited, despite advances in political participation of the colonized (universal suffrage, direct participation), and to build a welfare state for all (blocked by the very neoliberal structures that conditioned the transition itself). There has also been a recognition of land tenure rights for indigenous and other colonized groups, although slowed by bureaucratic mechanisms and violently confronted by settlers on the ground. In the imperialist core, the settler-colonial states of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States have so far succeeded in establishing European nations in third continents, while internal resistance to settler colonialism, even when confrontational, does not seem to question the state’s legitimacy. And then there is the State of Israel, with its ongoing settler-colonial genocidal project, aiming to grab all land of Palestine, exterminate or expel most of the Palestinian people, and subjugate the remaining as labor reserves within an apartheid system.

We must, therefore, ask what is the role of settler colonialism in this late neocolonial stage, and how do the trajectories of the settler-colonial states help us to understand it. This

issue of the Agrarian South Network Research Bulletin is a first attempt to address how (and to what end) settler colonialism is preserved under late neocolonialism. In the current juncture, besides Palestine – due to the victories achieved by the liberation movement and intensification of contradictions – special attention must be given to South Africa. South Africa heads to the polls on the 29th of May 2024 to elect a new political party to preside over the affairs of the country for the next 5 years. Since 1994 the country has been governed by the African National Congress (ANC) whose political support has been on a decline, thus raising interest in this forthcoming election. The path which the country will take post 29th of May 2024 is of critical concern for Africans, intellectuals and international bodies since South Africa is a major economic and political player in bodies such as the Southern African Development Committee (SADC), African Union (AU) and BRICS. More importantly, inequalities (race, class, land ownership and gender) can only be addressed by a political party whose ideological inclination is aimed at uprooting the current socio-economic and political structures.

Within South Africa, the African National Congress stands accused of implementing neo-liberal economic policies while also maintaining neo-apartheid structures that continue to permeate in South African society in various forms. However, as a former liberation movement, it has also projected itself as an anti-imperialist organization both at regional and global level. South Africa’s continued support for the oppressed peoples of Palestine, Russia, Western Sahara and Zimbabwe, and its open condemnation of the genocidal Israel, have been in direct conflict with global hegemonic forces such as the United States and its NATO allies. A schizophrenic approach from the ANC-led government is thus discernible. There are a number of opposition political parties in South Africa today, such as the liberal Democratic Alliance, and others rooted in South African liberation politics like the Economic Freedom

Fighters (EFF) and Umkhonto Wesizwe (MKP). Given the importance of South Africa which has already been highlighted, this special issue also takes into account the South African political landscapes.

In this double special issue, Yeros and Gissoni provide an overview of the late neocolonial period, underscoring its transition from decolonization and an early neocolonial situation, and the different trajectories affecting the colonial periphery, especially the settler-colonial one. Aji takes the reflection forward and discusses the roots of the category of settler colonialism as a term linked to movement practice and its recent revival, and dives deeper into the place of settler colonialism in the late neocolonial stage, with special attention to the role of the Zionist state. Mazwi and Mudimu present the case of Zimbabwe's transition from white-minority rule to black-majority rule, throwing light on the legacy of radical land reforms leading to international isolation and the entrenchment of neoliberalism, and the challenges related to building a development path in late neocolonialism. Huberman offers a comparative research investigating the underpinnings of the neocolonial transition, during this stage, in different settler-colonial contexts, especially Brazil and South Africa, as well as the absence of neocolonial transition in Palestine. This is followed by three different case studies. Eid-Sabbagh provides a comprehensive view of the trajectory of imperialism in Lebanon, from the Mandate to the neocolonial transition, perpassing settler-colonial interests in its natural resources, and the de-development of the southern border region with Israel. Malaman and Rondelli in their piece address how gay pornography has helped "pinkwash" the Palestinian genocide and build up an international coalition around Israeli policies, helping us to understand the former as an integral part of the settler colonialism practiced by the Jewish state over the Palestinian territories. Closing this section, Muratt applies the settler-colonial analytic framework to Brazil and deduces the limits of

the current neocolonial setting, especially in view of the third Lula presidential term and the role of the bourgeoisie.

In what follows, we bring forward two pieces on the upcoming elections in South Africa locating them within the country's trajectory as a former settler colony. Ngubane provides a bird's eye view of the political struggles and the alignment of the different political forces in play with emphasis on the land question, and Molepo discusses the traditional authority system and its influence on domestic politics, arguing that it has retained the nature of its colonial predecessor and cannot be a vehicle of progressive politics and social transformation in the rural areas. Finally, we introduce Koerner's considerations on the concept of "Working People" as developed by Shivji (2017), which he presented in the Agrarian South Network Study Group, and an Interview with the Arab intellectual Dr. Ali Kadri, translated by our associate editor Haithem Gasmî, in which he addresses "Al-Aqsa Flood" and the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip.

The Agrarian South Network Research Bulletin is a publication created in 2020 with the goal of discussing the unfolding covid-19 crisis among scholars and activists with a point of view from the south. Now, as a bimonthly journal, it aims to provide a platform for debate and critical reflection for the progressive forces across the periphery, whether through empirical, historical or theoretical analysis. Starting with the last issue, we have been experimenting with a collective editorial process by which one member of the editorial board is responsible for each issue, and all editors, whether associated or members of the editorial and advisory boards, are invited to review every piece. We hope the present issue contributes to the understanding of settler colonialism during this late neocolonial stage worldwide, by offering a perception of our common trajectory, challenges and generational mission in the periphery of the system.

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Imperialism and the late neocolonial situation

Paris Yeros¹ and Lucas Gissoni²

The challenge before us is to grasp the realities of social formations in the peripheries of the world economy for the purpose of illuminating the path of socialist transition. This challenge has at least two interrelated aspects. The first requires that we discern the changing correlation of forces around the principal contradiction between imperialism and working people in the Third World. This is no simple matter in view of the continuous evolution of imperialism and anti-imperialist forces. We will briefly address some aspects of these questions in order to provide further clarification. The second is to identify the trajectories and legacies of colonial situations in the late neocolonial situation. This should provide us with some further perspective on concrete political questions.

The late neocolonial situation

In analyzing the evolution of imperialism, we must consider the real contradictions over which it has ruled. As conceived by Lenin (1963[1916]), imperialism in its monopoly stage elevated the capitalist mode of production to its *highest* stage. This became the highest stage in terms of the high degree of concentration and centralization of capital, the mode of appropriation of rents specific to the monopolies and the intensification of the internal and external contradictions that correspond to it. Later elaborations sought to specify the operating conditions of the monopoly system in an even more concentrated phase with a tendency to stagnation and confrontation with an emergent Third World (Baran & Sweezy, 1966). At the turn of the 20th century, however, as Lenin noted, the basic contradictions still revolved around an

intense and expansive inter-imperialist rivalry with a renewed colonial project.

The highest stage at that juncture was not identical to the “last” stage in its objective and subjective conditions. The last phase of imperialism was reached precisely in the second half of the 20th century, in a situation of incipient stagnation parallel to the generalized process of decolonization and the neocolonial transition which this entailed, as conceived by Kwame Nkrumah (1965). This has been the last stage because the contradictions inaugurated by the anti-colonial movements elevated global class struggle to the level of direct conflict with the colonial political system, which has been the basic political system of historical capitalism. The anti-colonial movements put an end to the colonial system in general and globalized the principle of national self-determination.

General decolonization did not put an end to imperialism, or to all colonial situations, but it cleared the way for a new stage of struggle in those situations; at the same time, a new stage of competition emerged in the neocolonial world among a wide array of domestic forces and foreign monopolies. These contradictions were aggravated, as Nkrumah also observed, by the nuclear competition ushered in by the Cold War, which gave rise to new and grave dangers.

Samir Amin provided a set of formulations on the trajectory of this moribund stage of capitalism. Amin argued that decolonization reproduced the patterns of unequal development inherited from the colonial system but on a new level of contestation in which bourgeois nationalist and socialist strategies vied for leadership over the modernization of the new nations (Amin, 1976, 1980, 1983, 1990). Despite

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appearances, this did not consist in a new era of “capitalist expansion” but in struggles for a new dispensation which threatened imperialism. Anti-imperialist struggle in this stage, nonetheless, was hampered by the internal weaknesses of bourgeois and popular forces, and aggravated by the Cold War, which became, in reality, a Third World War, given the scale of imperialist aggression against liberation movements in all corners of the South. This eventually led to the compradorization of the bourgeoisies and the defeat or isolation of socialist transitions. But still, a pyrrhic victory it was, given that it also rendered capitalism obsolete as an historical system, unable to avoid its own historic demise (Amin, 1990, 2003).

On the economic level, monopoly capitalism in its advanced level of concentration and centralization could not sustain the absorption of its surpluses in a virtuous cycle of production and consumption. After the onset of the crisis in 1966, the assault on incomes in the centers and in the Third World would reinforce the path of decline. As Patnaik & Patnaik (2016) have also shown, the contradiction on a world scale continued to revolve around the value of the world’s key currency whose anchor remained in the primary commodities produced in the peripheries of the system. Higher consumption of one’s own primary products, as sought by developmentalist policies in the newly-independent South, eventually threatened the value of world money and hence profit margins at the center. On the other hand, the enforcement of lower consumption in the peripheries after the 1980s, as before decolonization, intended to restore prices levels and profits at the center, but at the expense especially of the working people in the Third World.

Amin (2014, 2019) argued that the new correlation of forces around this principal contradiction cleared the way for monopoly capitalism to shift towards a new generalized and financialized structure by which imperialist rent could be reinforced by the globalization of production and expansion of financial profits, while monopolies advanced

against all activities, upstream and downstream in every sector. In effect, a specifically neocolonial system for the drain of wealth was invented, based on a new round of super-exploitation of working people and their natural and energy resources, and the redirection of world savings into the Dollar-Wall Street nexus. Imperialism remained within the Triadic format of the US-led strategic alliance with Europe and Japan and expanded its control over the strategic heights of the world economy. But again, it could not avert crisis, or escape its fate. This also accounts for the continuous build-up of military capacities as a necessary economic and political fix and the aggressive expansion of military bases and interventionism in the East and South.

The general thesis regarding the principle contradiction is unshakable, even if one wishes to elaborate or adjust aspects of it. Yeros and Jha (2020) have argued along these lines that this last stage of imperialism has entailed a transition from an ‘early’ phase of neocolonialism, still disputed by nationalist states in the Bandung spirit, to a ‘late’ phase marked by the consolidation of neocolonialism in the course of the permanent crisis of monopoly capitalism. This late-neocolonial situation, corresponding to the period of neoliberal hegemony, has survived for nearly five decades now.

The obvious question concerns the intensification once again of anti-imperialist struggle from diverse sources, including the global emergence of China under market socialism, the re-radicalization of Third World nationalism (Iran, Venezuela, Yemen, Zimbabwe, among others), Russia’s military confrontation with NATO, and the armed struggle by the Axis of Resistance against Zionism (Yeros, 2024). But these questions do not have self-evident answers and certainly cannot be treated superficially in terms of “systemic cycles” or “power politics”, as imperialist political science would have us believe. We must still draw the correct conclusions regarding the correlation of class forces in the specific conditions of

late neocolonialism and the direction of change that is required for working people in the Third World.

First, we conclude that monopoly capitalism is unable to resolve its underlying contradictions of accumulation without the colonial system which maintained capitalism for centuries. The foregoing discussion and previous statements are sufficient for our present purposes. Second, this long stage of systemic decay will persist until a generalized transition to socialism takes root. Neither theories of “power politics” (Mearsheimer, 2001), nor of “systemic cycles” (Arrighi, 1994; Arrighi & Silver, 1999) – which are essentially imperialist theories, not theories of imperialism – can grasp the reality of a moribund system: there will be no new cycle for monopoly capitalism; there is no solution to power politics without the power of working people. Nor, indeed, can we take recourse to pure notions of “falling rate of profit” of “capitalism in general” (Roberts, 2016), which is also in vogue in the imperialist centers, to grasp the crisis of imperialism.

Third, the imperialist revenge against the emergent Third World has created an historic trap which will weigh heavily on socialist transitions in the twenty-first century. The integration of the productive forces of the Third World into global value systems dominated by the monopolies has proceeded on the basis of a new, long round of primitive accumulation. While delinking at some level is always possible, the real trap is the massive size of labor reserves that have been created in this late phase of neocolonialism (Jha *et al.*, 2017; Jha & Yeros, 2021, 2022, 2023; Yeros, 2023; Prasad & Yeros, 2024). The compradorization of the bourgeoisies, on the one hand, and the creation of massive labor reserves, on the other, undermines the exercise of sovereignty *from within*, not merely because of the weakness of the bourgeoisies and popular forces, but because of the fascistic tendencies and deeply polarized politics that it unleashes. Delinking with a popular sovereign orientation today indeed confronts

a different social formation from that of the 1960s. The contradiction is further aggravated in the twenty-first century by global warming and the extreme weather events which strike at working people in the labor reserves. This historic trap is the concrete starting point of socialist transition in the twenty-first century and must be confronted directly.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that neocolonialism as a historic condition must not be conflated with colonialism. The theory of colonialism has made a comeback in recent years, but it has come with a tendency, in its “decolonial” variant, to abstract from the stages of capitalism and even restrict the meaning of popular struggles. Decolonization was a defining moment in the history of capitalism, driven by an entirely new social force on a world scale, made up of peasants, workers and aspiring bourgeoisies, which put an end precisely to the colonial system, the natural political system of capitalism. Neocolonialism shifted the global axis of class struggle against monopoly capitalism, including for the unresolved colonial, settler colonial, and semi-colonial questions. Moreover, decolonization was a defining moment because it followed on the heels of the Bolshevik Revolution which itself opened the way for a new level of struggle worldwide for workers and peasants. The two revolutions – the socialist and the anti-colonial – erupted in historical synergy. The Chinese communists understood it thus:

[a] change...occurred in China’s bourgeois-democratic revolution after the outbreak of the first imperialist world war in 1914 and the founding of a socialist state on one-sixth of the globe as a result of the Russian October Revolution of 1917. Before these events, the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution came within the old category of the bourgeois-democratic world revolution, of which it was a part. Since these events, the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution has changed, it has come within

the *new category* of bourgeois-democratic revolutions and, as far as the alignment of revolutionary forces is concerned, forms part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution. Why? Because the first imperialist world war and the first victorious socialist revolution, the October Revolution, have changed the whole course of world history and ushered in a new era (Mao, 2004a, *italics ours*).

Anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles in late neocolonialism are not to be abstracted from this historical stage, lest we seek refuge in a “more humane” neocolonial situation, which is historically unsustainable. Not only do we have a century of socialist and developmentalist experiences behind us that place contemporary struggles on a new objective and subjective level, we also have before us the reality of Chinese market socialism which has uniquely leveraged the world economy to checkmate imperialism in the course of its decay.

Trajectories of colonial situations

One further set of questions which requires attention is the fate of the remaining colonial situations in the late neocolonial period. The three general forms of colonial rule mentioned above – colonies of European settlement, colonies of conquest/exploitation, and semi-colonies – were placed on the defensive in mid-twentieth century, most of them being dismantled thereafter. The United Nations still counts seventeen “non-self-governing territories” – Western Sahara, Gibraltar, and several among the islands of the Caribbean, the Atlantic, and the Pacific – but this list, of course, is incomplete. In general, the colonies of conquest in Asia and Africa were the earliest to gain independence in the postwar “winds of change”. Some transitioned straight into neocolonial rule, while the more resistant among the Bandung states fell into line at a later stage, either on the eve of the late neocolonial period (*e.g.*, Egypt) or in the course of the same (*e.g.*, India).

A related issue, nonetheless, is the semi-colonial situation to which some of these ex-colonies succumbed. Semi-

colonialism is based on more intense forms of primitive accumulation related to the partial seizure of territory by aggressive war, the imposition of unequal treaties, the stationing of military forces, and exercise of consular jurisdiction within the territory (Mao, 2004b; Yeros & Jha, 2020, p. 88). Arguably, the West African francophone countries lived on the precipice of this semi-colonial situation – as the term “*Françafrique*” might suggest – given the exceptional degree of direct economic and military tutelage which they continued to suffer (Pigeaud & Sylla, 2024, forthcoming). The outcomes of the recent national and popular uprisings against French neocolonialism in the region remain to be seen (Gisconi & Yeros, 2023). In any case, the serial fracturing of states in the late neocolonial period under the weight of imperialism – to include West, North and Central Africa, the Sahel, the Horn, West Asia and Afghanistan, and the Caribbean, especially Haiti – expanded the modern-day semi-colonial situation to a number of states which have suffered these most extreme results of the late-neocolonial contradictions (Moyo & Yeros, 2011).

The colonies of European settlement are a historical category onto themselves, although, as above, there are different trajectories among them. There are those, on the one hand, that became centers of monopoly capitalism (United States, Canada, Australia), while others remained dependent on the shifting centers across the North Atlantic, from the United Kingdom to the United States. The majority of these experiences have their origin in the first long wave of European colonial expansion in the Americas until the eighteenth century, while others in Africa, the Pacific, and Palestine succumbed thereafter in distinct moments. At that same juncture, the earlier American experiences began to break off from the European metropolises, yet only one, Haiti, broke with settler capitalism, the remaining persisting in a settler-colonial mode of accumulation and domination deep into the twentieth century. Harry Haywood (1933, 1948) provided the first robust engagement with this question within Marxist-Leninist

tradition, conceiving it as a type of “internal colonialism” within the imperialist center.

Dependent settler colonies of the enclave type in Central America and the Caribbean suffered from repeated imperialist interventions and regression into a semi-colonial situation. This condition recurred throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and remains a constant threat in the late neocolonial period. But those that evaded the semi-colonial situation remained in dependent settler-colonial mode of accumulation and domination. The transition to neocolonialism in Latin America remained spasmodic, with frequent imposition of military dictatorships. Even the revolution in Mexico remained limited, despite the new level of sovereignty obtained, given its delay of universal suffrage and its racial contradictions. Cuba has been the only experience which effectively rebelled against both settler capitalism and the neocolonial transition in mid-century by means of socialist revolution.

Overall, these American colonies of European settlement, despite their early juridical separation from the metropolises, maintained the structures of capital accumulation and the class relations inherited from European colonization. Therefore, the colonized peoples of the region evolved in tandem with the struggles in the rest of the colonial world and synergized in the twentieth century with the socialist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonial struggles. All these struggles converged in the mid-twentieth century. The dependent settler colonies of Latin America generally made their transitions to neocolonialism in the late-

neocolonial period, as in Southern Africa, with the consolidation of universal suffrage. In most cases, as in the case of Brazil specifically, a more entrenched neocolonial framework, made possible by financialized monopoly capitalism, was the precondition for a neocolonial transition acceptable to the settlers (Yeros *et al.*, 2019; Yeros & Jha, 2020; Gissoni *et al.*, 2024, forthcoming).

To this day, settler colonialism and its legacies fulfill crucial functions for imperialism. The remaining fully-fledged settler colonies are important sites of extraction of surplus value and exploitation of natural resources in themselves, as with the nickel mining industry in New Caledonia, and above all the Zionist state in the Arab world where energy resources and other strategic interests are paramount. These are all the more important given the permanent crisis of monopoly capital and the late neocolonial impasse. Moreover, the international alliances constructed around settler interests are basic to the fascist tendencies which are once again advancing in the course of crisis. In the past, settler interests closed ranks with imperialism systematically in South America and Southern Africa (Yeros *et al.*, 2019; Lobato, 2017; Marangoni, 2020; Gissone *et al.*, 2024). Clearly, today, they have been remobilized across continents in relation to the Zionist state behind the genocide of the Palestinians.

The history of colonialism is recent, and its end is ongoing. General decolonization is, fundamentally, the political basis of the permanent crisis of imperialism, which we see today, in the late-neocolonial period, in all its barbarism.

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Settler-Colonialism in the Late Neo-Colonial Period

Max Ajl¹

Settler-colonialism as a modern phenomenon is linked to the expansion of capitalism on a world scale, accompanying dynamics of polarized accumulation, the racialized distribution of development, and the genocides which underpinned that spatial broadening and deepening. As a social-historical process – rather than an abstraction – settler-colonialism is marked by wide-scale alienation of land from its previous inhabitants, “colonies of settlement,” as opposed to colonies marked by militarized occupation, land take-over, and accumulation through labor exploitation, primarily in agriculture or mining: colonies of conquest.

Yet, settler-colonialism, now widely known as a term, had two, and two very different, births as a category of analysis. One was linked to the national liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Its use was tied to aspirations for state sovereignty, national independence, the consummation of the world-wide political sovereignty regime and for de jure equality within the world-system, sometimes the expulsion of settlers. Settler colonialism as a category was also linked to, though not necessarily subverting or terminating, the alienated relationship to the land which settler-colonialism had produced as part of global expansion of imperialism and colonialism. It was used as a category of practice, offering a shared vocabulary which helped solidarities form amongst the myriad movements struggling for liberation from European colonialism in Asia and Africa, on the one hand, and struggling for land, sovereignty and liberation within the more hardened and entrenched settler-colonial formations which conquered more temperate regions in the Americas and elsewhere, on the other.

Throughout the 1950-1980s, struggles against settler-colonialism in Africa and Asia essentially succeeded in creating a framework for political sovereignty for the majority populations – although sometimes at the expense of maintaining settler property relations, and oftentimes facing defeat in their attempts at socialist construction and national liberation, leading to neo-colonial outcomes. This first “wave” of settler decolonization emerged as part of the defeat of the European empires and was the fruit of the surge of anti-colonial and even Marxist-Leninist revolutionary movements which illuminated the second half of the twentieth century. Remaining settler-property relations became either whitewashed through formal democratic institutions towards the dusk of the decolonization period (Namibia, South Africa, New Zealand); eventually contested through radicalized state-movement synergy (Zimbabwe), including through a “second” Plurinational decolonization (Bolivia, Ecuador) amidst the resurgence of the national question in the post-Soviet moment; or remained under the boot of entrenched, militarized, or genocidal consolidated settler-capitalist regimes (the US, Canada, Australia, and above all Israel) during the late neo-colonial period.

The second birth of settler-colonial analysis was partly contiguous and partly novel, emerging, and flourishing, in the late 1990s, alongside burgeoning struggles for equity, recognition, justice, and decolonization amongst those colonized or stigmatized within settler and non-settler nation states – the indigenous question. The analysis re-emerged during a period of rising suspicion of the party-form and the nation-state as organizational practices and political horizons, and in an anti-Communist post-Soviet moment. The use of the political terminology “Indigenous” grew to

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greater prominence, not just in its traditional heartlands like the Canadian and US settler-states, but furthermore elsewhere such as in Palestine, where although the term might have had historical relevance, the argot of Arab nationalism was a more dominant category of practice.

These two births were of two different moments, and accordingly produced, in essence, two different categories of analysis. A focus on landed settlement was characteristic of the first stage of settler-colonial analysis, and an emphasis on teleological elimination, most famously associated with Patrick Wolfe, very often marks the second (Ajl 2023). What is shared between those modes of analysis is an emphasis on prevailing property structures within the world system, including their racialized character. Yet, the Weberian mode based on “ideal types” often is now used to create parallels between situations which, while they have important similarities, also have important differences. For example, the parallel or analogy between the United States and Israel has often gone far afield with baleful implications for movement practices, not because the similarities are unimportant but because the differences are critical, on multiple levels.

Illustratively, as Lila Abu Lughod writes with what seems an excess of contempt for the older struggles for national liberation,

Instead of the well-worn comparisons with the imperial powers of the colonial/post-colonial canon—the French, the British, or the Dutch—or with the anti-colonial struggles that emerged in response, struggles that presumed national liberation to be the goal, anticolonial nationalism to be the ideology, and political solidarities to lie with Third World anti-imperial struggles, the references now privilege Indigenous and First Nation peoples (Abu-Lughod 2020).

She is entirely correct, yet it has never been shown – it is rather asserted or implied – why national liberation ought to have been discarded, anti-colonial nationalism to be dismissed, and political solidarities with Third

World states irrelevant. Indeed, such talk can only be sustained when the Palestinian national movement and its factions are ignored, and their political alliances spurned or demeaned (indeed, it remains subject to accusations of “campism” to point out that Syria and Iran arm and provide logistical routes for the Palestinian militia and their allies). In this way, parallels focused exclusively on indigeneity have tended to foreclose consideration of the Arab national question and Arab-Iranian strategic, material, and logistic depth when it comes to Palestine, to the point that contemporary anti-Zionist academia will literally not mention the forces which support the Palestinian armed struggle, and accordingly tend to underplay imperialism. They also fail to bring into view the western urgency to defend the existing property structures, as with the sanctions regime on Zimbabwe for its radical anti-racist agrarian reform.

When we move from analysis of the world to the world, it is clear that surviving settler-colonialisms provide the social basis for capitalism and imperialism to organize fascist or social-chauvinist movements, as with not merely Israel but also domestic Zionist movements in the US. The hard-right popular base of Trump, or the Zionist volunteers on US campuses, are the proof of this, with their accompanying positions in general hostility to immigration or other anti-racist sentiment within the imperial core.

While neo-fascist ideologies and parties of the far right are on the rise across the capitalist core, the eclectic and genocidal mix of white supremacy, defense of extant property relations, support for imperialism, and ideologies of nativism and cleansing find a particular support in the remaining high-development index settler colonies of advanced capitalism. Indeed, even in the Latin American countries which saw significant juridical and cultural changes under radicalized states, whiteness or European ancestry still maps over land ownership and provides a potent discourse of reaction – attacks on Evo

Morales and Hugo Chávez, for example, had a clear racial element.

For Palestine (or Israel), settler-colonialism goes beyond the material, the land itself, to the symbolic – a synecdoche for capitalist property relations and white racial power on a world scale, precisely because of the brutality of the Zionist colonial practice and its role as a world-wide Sparta for imperialism and reaction. Indeed, the right – in fact, a frequent source of antisemitic politics – on a world scale takes pains to pay fealty to Israeli settler-colonialism upon assuming office, understanding Israel as a key component of and symbol of the global class war, revanchism against internal minorities or other oppressed people, a defense of a racially-coded property structure, a way of paying the dues of a vassal to the United States and the global capitalist order which the US superintends, bodyguards, and within which it is the major repository of accumulation. Thus, it has been by clear logic that Milei in Argentina, or Bolsonaro in Brazil, hastened to support Israel as they came to power. Indeed, weak social democrats have played the same game. One of the first moves of Alexis Tsipras as SYRIZA came to power in Greece and as he signaled that he wished to play ball with the Troika and essentially surrender to European (German and secondarily French) monopoly capital, was to visit Israel, calling Greece the former's "friend."

Furthermore, struggles against settler-colonialism, while far easier to co-opt in the settler-capitalist heartlands like the US and Canada rather than Palestine (in Zimbabwe, it should be noted, rather than attempts to coopt anti-settler mobilizations, the contradictions around white-Black property relations have been basically denied or dismissed, with some scholars defending racialized property structures on productivist grounds), have been the most potent challenges and activators to the global distribution of wealth. Within the US itself, the American Indian Movement, or other challenges to the US as a settler-capitalist landed empire, such as the various agrarian

forms of Black nationalism, faced white-hot scorching by the counter-insurgency apparatus of the settler capitalist states. More recently, in a more complicated episode, the anti-settler-colonial revolts within the US have been activating points for anti-systemic resistance on a national scale, as at Standing Rock. (They have also been talking points or touchstones easily fetishized by imperialist social democrats like Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez). Similarly Idle No More in Canada, with a very different demographic basis for anti-colonial struggle than in the US, has been an activating point for the Canadian left.

Yet, it is probably not the extant settler-colonial capitalist property structures within the capitalist core, and the challenges to them, that have illuminated the nature of global imperialism in the clearest relief in its contours and textures, but those in the Third World. It is significant that the major challenges to the existing system over the last two decades have, in a wide variety of registers, contested white capitalist property relations. In Bolivia, and Venezuela, racialized lumpen-proletariat or semi-proletarianized sectors of Indigenous or Indigenous-Black ancestry elected radical-populist leaders whose very presence in the castles of the state challenged at the level of imaginary the racialized dispensation of social power. Even with the limits and tragedies and reversals of those still-breathing, still-vibrant experiments, it is notable that support for the Palestinian struggle has been a central component of their foreign policy and the images they display to the world.

Furthermore, the Arab national struggle, historically and in the present moment, articulates itself through support for Palestine, with the understanding, present in the entire lineage of Marxist Palestinian thought, that settler-colonial property structures and their organic relationship with militarism and imperialism constitute a wrecking ball of social destabilization and geopolitical fragmentation and disarray in the Arab region.

The continued salience of settler-colonial structures on a world scale overlaps

with the preservations of a unipolar and capitalist world – actually-existing historical and contemporary capitalism. The urge to preserve those class relations and dynamics of power and powerlessness explains the convergence of the settler states not merely around support for Israel, but furthermore for their ferocious defense, via sanctions and de-

development, on the entire configuration of forces which seek to challenge those relationships, from Zimbabwe to Iran to Venezuela to Yemen to Palestine. In this sense, settler-capitalism under late neo-colonialism remains, in symbolic and practice, a central contradiction for the world’s liberation movements.

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Late Neocolonialism and the Search for a Development Path in a Former Settler Colony: The Zimbabwean Case

Freedom Mazwi¹ & George T. Mudimu²

Introduction

Drawing on works by the late intellectual giant Samir Amin, three macro-regions can be identified in contemporary Black Africa, namely; *Africa of the colonial trade Economy*, *Africa of the concession-owning companies*, and *Africa of the labour reserves* (Amin 1972). Although it is generally agreed that these regions have not been static over the past six decades due to shifts in the global political economy, the categorization by Amin remains useful for understanding contemporary challenges in postcolonial Africa. From Samir Amin's broad characterization, Africa of the colonial trade in West African countries (Nigeria, Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Ghana) mainly served as a source of cheap labour and primary products for the metropolitan states. Other countries such as Cameroun, Chad, and Togo also constituted part of this first macro-region.

The mode of accumulation for *Africa of the concession-owning companies* entailed the establishment of plantations and estates which also preyed heavily on African labor to facilitate primitive accumulation at a broad scale in countries such as Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, and Central African Republic. We focus on the macro-region of *Africa of the labour reserves*. In this region, white settlers not only separated Africans from their means of production but also established exploitative labour relations to facilitate primitive accumulation in Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, Kenya, Swaziland, Mozambique, Angola, Uganda, and Tanzania (Amin 1972). This piece unpacks the neocolonial situation in one of the settler colonies, namely Zimbabwe. Utilizing

Nkrumah (1966), Yeros and Jha (2020) and Yeros's (2021) thesis on neocolonialism and late-neocolonialism we argue that independence and sovereignty in Zimbabwe remain “unfinished business” due to a hierarchical and unipolar global system mainly defined by neoliberal economics.¹

Zimbabwe's Transition from White-minority rule to Black-majority rule

We begin by highlighting the contradictory nature of the immediate postcolonial regime led by the late President Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Emerging from a protracted liberation war struggle fighting the white-settler regime, the newly independent government made serious concessions with elements of the former , and also with London and Washington, to retain private property rights on white-owned land and to preserve a certain quota of legislative seats for the right-wing white political party. This was done to forestall any potential constitutional changes with the potential of undermining white privileges (Moyo 1995; Ncube 2023). Resultantly, as argued by Moyo (1995) the liberal agenda came to dominate Zimbabwe's land policy-making space from 1980-1998 characterized by market-led land reforms and limited land transfers to the black indigenous population during this period. The broad socio-economic transformation that had been promised to the black population could not be achieved due to the pursuit of liberal policies although it must be stated that the state heavily intervened in the provision of social services such as health and education (Moyo 1995).The

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state also decentralized state marketing boards to peasant communities that had previously been marginalized by the white-settler regime, and more critically provided maize input and output price support schemes for grain produced by peasants (ibid). From 1990, the country was under the tutelage of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), and Western donors in a development that led to the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes that led to massive deindustrialization, unemployment, growth of the informal sector as well as the feminization of poverty (Kanyenze et al 2011; Moyo 1995; Moyo and Yeros 2005). The growth of labour reserves and semi-proletarianization also grew exponentially due to job cuts that were done in the name of economic efficiency.

This period can be described as what Nkrumah (1966) called neocolonialism – the highest stage of imperialism. Yeros and Jha (2020) further posit that the neoliberal ascendancy escalated the rise of giant monopolies, financialization, and the growth of semi-proletarianization in postcolonial Africa's social formations. Indeed, as has been argued by several scholars, this is the situation that prevailed in Zimbabwe in the late 1990s providing fertile ground for a “revolutionary situation” (Moyo and Yeros 2007). This moment that confronted Zimbabwe was a result of the failure to 'decolonize' and sidelining the majority of blacks (rural, urban, and state-bureaucrats and indigenous bourgeoisie) from accumulation in the agrarian and industrial sectors (Moyo 1995; Moyo and Yeros 2007). The next section discusses the radicalization of the Zimbabwean state and responses by Western hegemonic forces.

Radical Land Reforms and International Isolation

Following close to two decades of failure to address socio-economic inequalities arising from colonialism and neoliberal economic policies, a challenge to unequal land ownership patterns inherited at independence was launched beginning in 1998. This challenge was

led by a landless movement composed of ex-combatants, the landless, and urbanites with active support from state bureaucrats (Moyo et al 2009; Moyo and Yeros 2005; Chambati and Mazwi 2022). Under the banner of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), ex-combatants led the urbanites and ordinary people in land occupations, thus dismantling a century-old social and economic order, the first of its kind since the end of the Cold War (Moyo and Yeros 2007; Moyo and Chambati 2013). In essence, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) that was implemented in Zimbabwe in 2000 challenged the logic that land reform could only take place under market-led conditions and triggered a wave of responses from the United States of America (USA), the European Union (EU), the IMF and the World Bank.

A corpus of literature that has emerged post-2000 demonstrates that the land reform in Zimbabwe was redistributive in character (Moyo et al 2009; Scoones et al 2010; Mamdani 2008). Over 160, 000 households from different agroecological zones directly benefitted from the exercise with an estimated 2 million also benefitting indirectly (Moyo et al 2009). The wider impacts of the land reform in other sectors of the economy in newly redistributed lands is an area that still requires further research but anecdotal evidence suggests that there has been the diversification of local economies (Muchetu & Shonhe (2022); Mazwi & Yeros 2023). The growth of informal small-scale industries at a local level and the booming construction industry all seem to point to agriculture and mining as a catalyst of such growth. There is scope for further research to establish the link between the radical land reform and the ever-changing local economies.

The radicalization by the Zimbabwean state was not without repercussions. As Zimbabwe radicalized and sought to challenge late neocolonialism, economic sanctions were imposed on the country by the United States of America which enacted the Zimbabwe

Democracy Recovery Act (ZIDERA) in 2001 which was later amended in 2018. The key demands under ZIDERA entailed the reversal of the radical land reforms and giving back land to the former white commercial farmers, respect of human rights, and allowing for the conduct of 'free and fair' elections. Key government institutions which play a critical role in economic development and senior government officials were placed under sanctions. Top-ranking politicians within the ruling ZANU-PF were also placed under sanctions. The EU also placed the country under sanctions raising issues related to 'human rights' and 'free and fair elections' but we must point out that the land reform was the trigger.

As a result of the sanctions, the Zimbabwean currency was seriously destabilized leading to hyperinflation, and a shortage of foreign exchange and basic commodities post-2000. Research has also shown that banking institutions and international tobacco merchants have faced extreme difficulties in sourcing offshore credit finance as Zimbabwe is ranked as a high-credit-risk country (Interviews, 28 March 2018). According to some analysts, this has all been in an attempt to trigger an insurrection that would ultimately unseat the ruling party. Closely linked to this was the shift from providing bilateral aid at a state-to-state level towards supporting civil society organizations that stand accused by the state and the ruling party of attempting to engineer regime change. A similar pattern has been observed in other countries under sanctions such as Cuba and Venezuela where the opposition and civil society have been sponsored to challenge the ruling establishment.

Such challenges faced by Zimbabwe post-2000 illustrate the limitations of radicalization outside the spirit of Bandung and the challenges posed by the unipolar world (see Yeros & Jha, 2021). A key factor that sustained Zimbabwe politically from succumbing to the machinations of neocolonial forces was the active support provided by the Southern African

Development Community (SADC), a sub-regional grouping mainly composed of Southern African states drawn from *Africa of the labor reserves*. This sub-regional grouping is made up of former liberation movements who have from time to time entered into pacts to defend national sovereignty from imperialist aggression.

Entrenchment of Neoliberalism

It will, however, be gross intellectual dishonesty to solely blame sanctions for the economic misfortunes of the country without taking into consideration policy and ideological missteps. Looking at policy and ideology, the Robert Mugabe administration became consistent with the black economic empowerment programmes post-2000 through policies such as the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act which stipulated that 51% of all mining investments should be owned by indigenous people. Further to that, local communities were entitled to 10 % of the shareholding in foreign-owned firms. Related to land reform, there was a strong emphasis on the irreversibility of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), with land transfers and land leasing outlawed. This phenomenon is described as the radicalization of the state (see Moyo and Yeros 2005).

The coming in of a new administration in 2017 brought some policy changes veering towards neoliberalism in an attempt to attract 'international investors'. This entailed the suspension pending repeal of the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act as well the introduction of new policy measures in the land sector to permit land leases and 'Joint Ventures'. Many critics have argued that this has a propensity to reverse some of the gains made under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (see Mudimu et al 2021; Mazwi 2022). Alongside sanctions, the neoliberal adventure is yet to yield positive results for the rural and urban working class. The state of the health and education sectors remains dire, characterized by a lack of meaningful infrastructure, reading texts, and

medical equipment in most cases in short supply. Overall, it can be concluded that the privatization of key social services, including water, remains a threat to the well-being of the people which can only be reversed through a socialist path.

The recent (re)discovery of lithium, gas, and oil in some parts of the country and the increasing penetration of foreign capital in the extractive sector has led some critical analysts to argue that the recent partial lifting of sanctions by the USA instituted in March 2024 is nothing but a representation of an ongoing resurgent scramble for resources on the African continent. We contend that this penetration of capital is bound to fail in lifting the standards of living of the majority-working people unless the state shifts its focus to mineral beneficiation and economic diversification under a socially just path. The debate on nationalizing key sectors of the economy must be revisited for popular sovereign development to take shape in Zimbabwe. While we take cognizance of the recently established Mutapa Investment Fundⁱⁱⁱ as one vehicle for such transformation, we argue that indigenization policies must be enacted lest such initiatives end up as being another neoliberal accumulation axis. To achieve such a pivotal endogenous development, there is a need to rekindle the nationalist and Pan-Africanist ideals of

Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, Robert Mugabe, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Sedah Senghor and Ahmed Sekou Toure amongst others.

Conclusion

This piece has argued that despite efforts to radicalize, Zimbabwe still finds herself entrapped in late neocolonialism. Sanctions have been used as a tool by hegemonic forces to shape policy or sponsor insurrections. The state has insisted that the radical land reform remains irreversible but recent policy shifts indicate otherwise. Credit must, however, be given to the state for implementing several initiatives to support farmers in light of the crisis of agricultural finance triggered by sanctions and capital flight. Going forward Zimbabwe needs to embark on an autonomous development trajectory. For this to happen several initiatives must be done. There is an urgent need to adopt a clear ideological path based on social justice and equity. Deliberate action must be made to empower the impoverished majority through indigenization policies. The state must stay far and clear from the neoliberal path with all its pseudo promises of Dubai like dreams of skyscrapers. In addition, there is a need to embrace the Pan-African philosophy and the Bandung spirit alongside other developing countries to build a buffer zone against neocolonial machinations that undermine progressive forces.

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ⁱⁱ Mutapa Investment Fund was formerly Zimbabwe's Sovereign Wealth Fund. In September 2023, the President also transferred ownership of 20 state entities in the mining, transport, oil, railways, communications, power, and agricultural sectors to the Fund.

Genocide, settler colonialism and the transition to late neo-colonialism in Palestine/Israel, Brazil and South Africa

Bruno Huberman¹

The current phase of the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza, initiated in October 2023 after the Al Aqsa Flood military operation on 7th October 2023 by the Palestinian resistance, has resulted in the loss of over 40,000 Palestinian lives and the displacement of millions. An examination of the Israeli regime and its connections to US imperialism is necessary to comprehend the circumstances that facilitated the perpetration of such a genocide.

Although since the 1960s, Palestinian authors had already analyzed Israel as the product of a settler colonial process (Sayegh, 1965/2012; Jabbour, 1970), following the publication of Patrick Wolfe's (2006) article "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native" there has been a growth in the literature interpreting Israel as a settler colonial state (Veracini 2015; Salamanca et al. 2012; Huberman 2023). According to Wolfe's theory, the settler colonial process can be understood through a structural "logic of elimination". The settler colonization of indigenous land involves the eradication of the native population through means such as death, expulsion, assimilation, and confinement.

Palestinian Nakba of 1948, which involved the expulsion of over 750,000 Palestinians and the destruction of 500 villages, along with the historical massacres of Palestinians like Sabra and Shatila in 1982, and the subsequent confinement of the remaining Palestinians in highly securitized enclaves in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, serve as evidence of an underlying settler colonial rationale behind these events (Salamanca et al. 2012). The settler colonial process persists as long as there is indigenous territory to be expropriated. The Israeli war on the Palestinians in Gaza is a new phase of

this long-lasting confiscation process. I agree with the criticisms directed towards Wolfe's perspective on settler colonialism, specifically regarding the inadequacy of comprehending the intricacies of class and labour (Englert 2020) and the struggle for national liberation in Palestine (Ajl 2023). However, the Israeli genocide in Gaza highlights the need to examine the elimination power of Israeli settler colonialism, which seeks to eradicate Palestinian society in Gaza through systematic killing and forced displacement.

US imperialism has employed destruction and warfare against racially subaltern groups during the late neocolonial period to address the permanent crises posed by monopoly capital (Capasso, Kadri 2023). The foreign policy and accumulation strategy of the Joe Biden administration (2020-) revolves around war to benefit the US military-industrial complex. This approach is exemplified by the persistent stance of confronting Russia, despite the setbacks experienced in the Ukrainian War (2022-). Also, by the unwavering commitment to aiding Israel, notwithstanding the popular disapproval of the US involvement in the genocide in Gaza. The security industries of the US and Israel are intricately linked and utilize the Palestinian territories as a testing ground for their weaponry (Loewenstein 2023). The result of this settler alliance between the US and Israel is the promotion of the genocide in Gaza, which bears resemblance to other instances of indigenous elimination efforts in the United States, Brazil, and other settler colonial contexts.

Through a comparative analysis of the settler colonial experiences in Brazil and South Africa, as well as their subsequent transition to neo-colonialism, I aim to

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contribute to the ongoing discussion surrounding the Israeli genocide in Gaza. I want to illustrate how Israeli settler colonialism and the country's role in US imperialism hinder the transition to neo-colonialism in Palestine, which in turn contributes to the scale of the genocide in Gaza.

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Brazil is another settler colony that has been implicated in the perpetration of genocide against indigenous and other subaltern populations. The expansion of large landowners' estates, and other extractive activities, including illegal mining, has resulted in the expulsion and death of numerous indigenous, quilombolaⁱ, and traditional communities, particularly in the Amazon region. From 2022 to 2023, a total of 706 Yanomami individuals lost their lives due to the repercussionsⁱⁱ of illicit mining activities in the Amazon region (FSP 2024), which were permitted by the Jair Bolsonaro government (2019-2022) and have not been effectively controlled by the Lula da Silva administration (2023-). Moreover, the "war on drugs" has rationalized the state's violence against Black youth residing in urban favelas, leading to their death and mass incarceration. On February 2, 2024, a military police officer in Santos was fatally shot, purportedly by a criminal organization. Subsequently, the police force in the region has been responsible for the deaths of 50 individuals, predominantly of African descent (UOL, 2024). The Yanomami people in the Amazon and the black population in the Baixada Santistaⁱⁱⁱ have experienced systematic deaths, which are recent occurrences within a prolonged process of genocide targeting indigenous and black youth in the country. Poets (2020) illustrates the historical deviation of Brazilian settler colonialism from a "logic of elimination", as the exploitation of indigenous labour has been a prominent aspect of this historical process. However, the ongoing genocides serve as evidence that elimination remains a significant manifestation of power by the

Brazilian neo-colonial state (Huberman and Nasser 2019).

Yeros et al (2019) highlight the inherent contradiction between the perpetration of genocidal violence against racially subaltern populations in Brazil and the implementation of policies aimed at fostering social and racial justice. This contradiction is regarded as the manifestation of late neo-colonialism in the country. According to the authors, Brazil underwent a transition towards late neo-colonialism because of the inherent ambiguities within the process that led to the demise of the civil-military dictatorship (1964 -1985). The primary conflict arises from the growth of a monopoly financial capital within the nation after the debt crisis in the late 1970s, juxtaposed with the emergence of the democratization movement of the 1980s. This movement, as enshrined in the 1988 Constitution, introduced universal suffrage, the criminalization of racism, the universalization of healthcare, agrarian reform, and the protection of the rights of indigenous, quilombola, and traditional communities. The outcome manifests as a societal conflict between a white settler bourgeoisie that seeks to uphold its privileges through the super-exploitation of labour and the expropriation of natural resources, versus a popular movement fighting for complete political, economic, and social decolonization. Hence, the activities of monopoly capital establish the circumstances under which the Brazilian state can exert its power of elimination against black and indigenous peoples, facilitating the primitive accumulation of capital.

For a comprehensive understanding of the transition to neo-colonialism, Yeros and Jha (2020) highlight the distinctive characteristics of the settler colonies in Latin America and Southern Africa. In the years following World War II, coups d'état and dictatorships halted their transitions to neo-colonialism and guaranteed the upholding of white supremacy. The move to late neo-colonialism in countries such as Brazil and South Africa occurred only in the neoliberal era. As a result, the colonized movements

witnessed the preservation of power, territorial control, and the exploitation of the semi-proletarian working class by white settler elites, even during periods of progressive ANC (African National Congress) governments in South Africa (1994-) and PT (Worker's Party) administrations in Brazil (2003-16; 2023-). The concept of late neo-colonialism also provides insight into the foreign policies of South Africa and Brazil, which seek increased independence and closer relations with the South as manifested by the establishment of BRICS and the strong condemnation of Israeli settler colonialism as well as the genocide in Gaza, yet failing to deviate substantially from the influence of US imperialism and monopoly capital. Bond (2015) sees these countries' involvement in UN peace missions, such as Brazil in Haiti (2004-17) and South Africa in South Sudan (2011-), as sub-imperialist actions. Nevertheless, South Africa has demonstrated stronger material support for the Palestinians by cutting off diplomatic ties with Israel and lodging accusations of genocide against the nation in the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Brazil has endorsed South Africa's actions in the ICJ but continues to maintain diplomatic, commercial, and military relations with Israel. In the face of genocide in Gaza, how do the transitions to late neo-colonialism in Brazil and South Africa facilitate the comprehension of Israeli settler colonialism?

The Brazilian case provides insight into how Israel impeded the transition towards neo-colonialism in Palestine throughout the Cold War. According to Gissoni et al (2024), the potential for national liberation in Brazil during the early 1960s, marked by the emergence of a nationalist movement and the implementation of social reforms by the João Goulart government (1961-64), prompted the settler elite to choose authoritarianism as a means of preserving control over the domestic political landscape and aligning with US imperialism. This decision included the establishment of a civil-military dictatorship. The national-settler project

carried out by the dictatorship aimed to balance mild opposition to imperialism with “industrial development with settler monopoly of land and the reproduction of the colonial mode of accumulation through primitive accumulation at the expense of the colonized”.

Brazilian history helps to understand the period of Labor governments in Israel, which began with the founding of Israel in 1948. The Nakba effectively thwarted the potential for Palestinian national liberation and the subsequent shift towards neo-colonialism in Palestine, akin to the military coup that occurred in Brazil in 1964. Therefore, the Nakba and the establishment of Israel hindered the Palestinians from attaining authority over a post-colonial state after the demise of the British Mandate (1918-48). The result is the ongoing direct settler colonial dominance of the Israeli state over the Palestinian people and land. This situation can be likened to the military coup in Brazil, which excluded the colonized population from the state.

The first two decades of the Labor governments, until 1967, were marked by governments that sought to achieve a certain level of foreign policy independence in their interactions with Western and Soviet blocs, such as the Brazilian dictatorship and Apartheid South Africa. Moreover, the Labor administrations prioritized the advancement of a “national-settler project” with the development of productive forces for the benefit of Jewish settlers at the cost of dispossessing Palestinians' land and labour. The establishment of a military occupation in the confiscated territories of the West Bank and Gaza during the 1967 war against Syria, Jordan, and Egypt played a significant role in fostering closer ties between Israel and the United States. Israel, Brazil, and South Africa played comparable roles in the US “sphere of influence” policy during the Cold War, comprising a “settler international” in West Asia/North Africa, South America, and Southern Africa. The three countries played a sub-imperialist role by actively combating communist and nationalist forces in their respective regions. However, starting in

1967, the “special relationship” between the US and Israel hindered any possibility of Israeli autonomy and initiated a process of interconnecting the military-industrial complexes of the two countries different from what was seen in Brazil and South Africa. The primary reason for the improved relationship between the US and Israel is Israel's strategic significance in countering nationalist forces in the region, which hinder unrestricted US access to the region's oil. This has been evident from the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt to the period following the 1979 revolution in Iran.

The transition to neo-colonialism in Brazil at the end of the dictatorship, in 1985, occurred with the simultaneous adoption of neoliberalism (Gissoni, Carvalheira, and Macedo 2024). The Brazilian settler elite was able to hold onto power under late neo-colonialism, primarily through the monopoly of financial capital and the white ownership of land, which hindered the development of the national-popular project following the dictatorship. The shift towards late neo-colonialism in South Africa followed a comparable pattern to that of Brazil. In both countries, the maintenance of economic power and land control by the white bourgeoisie, facilitated by neoliberal reforms, hindered the achievement of socioeconomic justice for the colonized population (Yeros, Schincariol, and da Silva 2019).

Andy Clarno (2017) conducts a comparative analysis between South Africa and Palestine/Israel to gain insight into the contrasting dynamics of “decolonization” and the emergence of neoliberalism in both countries during the 1990s. Clarno employs the concept of “neoliberal apartheid” to elucidate how neoliberalism facilitated the perpetuation of segregation in novel manners after the end of the apartheid in South Africa in 1994, as well as the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993-95. According to Clarno, neoliberal apartheid in South Africa and Palestine/Israel has been marked by the implementation of privatized security systems that target subaltern communities, the increasing segregation of social and

spatial aspects, and the exploitation of precarious labour. Based on Clarno's contribution, can we interpret the Oslo period as a shift towards late neo-colonialism in Palestine/Israel, similar to its transition in South Africa? Not precisely.

The Oslo Accords were the outcome of a prolonged Palestinian anti-colonial resistance. Since the 1950s, Palestinian refugees have developed diverse strategies of resistance while in exile, primarily focusing on establishing alliances with Arab states and nations in the Global South. The objective was to challenge Israeli settler colonialism and pave the way for their return. The armed resistance emerged in the 1960s under the leadership of the PLO, influenced by the Algerian, Cuban, and Chinese revolutions. Following the Arab States' defeat in the 1967 war, the Palestinian armed struggle experienced both victories exemplified by the Battle of Karameh in 1968, and losses, as witnessed in the Lebanese Civil War. In the 1980s, there was a decrease in armed conflict, which led to the emergence of the popular movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), known as the Intifada, in 1987. The utilization of civil disobedience strategies, exemplified by the refusal to comply with Israeli tax obligations, presented Israel with novel obstacles that extended beyond the confrontation of armed guerrillas or the management of Palestinian labour exploitation. The Palestinian uprising for self-determination could not be suppressed by coercive repression and limited economic welfare.

The Palestinian leaders of the Intifada participated in the beginning of the diplomatic negotiations for peace in the Middle East, which were initiated during the Madrid Conference in 1991. Nevertheless, the setting up of a secret channel between the PLO and Israel, facilitated by Norwegian negotiators, led to the Oslo Accords in 1993. This agreement caused the alienation of Palestinian Intifada leaders by the old leadership in exile. Consequently, the agreements failed to articulate the assertions of the Intifada, thereby serving as a mechanism for the PLO leadership to

consolidate its authority. Oslo did not mark the end of legal segregation and settler's direct domination in Palestine, but rather the beginning of a transitional period purportedly aimed at the formation of an independent State of Palestine. However, the negotiation never led to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state. The agreements resulted in a reorganization of the settler colonial control over the OPT, enabling the Israelis to outsource the administration and pacification of the colonized populations to the PA, while still retaining unrestricted control of the entire territory they aimed to settle (Gordon 2008). The implementation of barriers and checkpoints in Gaza and the West Bank further intensified the segregation of Palestinian non-citizens following the Oslo Accords.

The establishment of neoliberal paradigms for the state-building of the Palestinian State was facilitated by the permanence of the Paris Protocols (1994), which were overseen by International Financial Institutions (IFIs). A considerable number of Palestinians opted for the building of a neoliberal state as the most rational approach to achieving national liberation (Khalidi and Samour 2011). Nevertheless, these efforts actively facilitated the growth of precarious Palestinian labour, the seizure of Palestinian territory, and an increase in security measures coordinated by Israelis and Palestinians. The territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea remained under the sole sovereignty of the State of Israel, which exercises control over all Palestinians through an apartheid regime. Therefore, Oslo meant the abortion of the neo-colonial transition for the Palestinians following decades of anti-colonial struggle for national liberation, just like the military coup in Brazil, in 1964, and the Nakba, in 1948.

The deep contradictions of Oslo explain why there was no transition to late neo-colonialism in Palestine compared to South Africa and Brazil. The end of South African apartheid and the Brazilian dictatorship was marked by inherent contradictions that led to the continued

power of the settler elites. However, it also marked the conclusion of legal segregation and direct settler domination. The universalization of suffrage and other fundamental rights signified a progression towards a liberal democratic system in both countries, enabling the colonized to pursue their political objectives and attain rights in manners that were previously inaccessible. Although neo-colonialism means the permanence of colonialism in new indirect ways, it also involves sharing power with the colonized. This is precisely the limitation of Claro's contribution to understanding the neoliberal apartheid situation in Palestine. In South Africa, there exists a potential for the colonized population, such as socialist movements, to access the government through parliamentary elections and advocate for alterations in both foreign and domestic policies. The ANC-led government's backing of the Palestinians, despite facing internal challenges in maintaining segregation through the neoliberal market and occasionally aligning with US imperialism, provides clear proof of this stance.

The transition to late neo-colonialism in Brazil and South Africa constitutes a distinct condition for the settler state to use sovereign power against the racially subaltern population in an unhindered way. Neo-colonialism imposes constraints on the legal sovereignty of a post-colonial state, but it also means a material context that determines the ability of the colonized to resist. For example, the alliance between the supremacist administrations of Jair Bolsonaro and Benjamin Netanyahu exemplified the robustness of settler solidarity in promoting the expropriation of the colonized population, consequently leading to the intensification of the genocide in both nations. However, the transition to neo-colonialism allowed the Brazilians to oust Bolsonaro from power through a popular vote and thwart a new coup d'état through democratic means. Another illustration of the significance of the transition to neo-colonialism in settler colonies is the prevention of an Afrikaner

fascist government in South Africa. The Palestinians lack the same means as Brazilian and South African subalterns to contain the genocidal state violence and advance a progressive national-popular project.

Therefore, the Palestinian/Israeli, Brazilian and South African cases demonstrate that it is crucial to analyze the transition to late neo-colonialism to understand how the power of elimination is advanced in settler colonial contexts. The genocide in Gaza shows that the elimination power of a settler colonial regime operates unimpeded under a direct settler colonial

domination that hinders the resistance capabilities of the Palestinians. Thus, the shift towards neo-colonialism, even within the neoliberal framework of late neo-colonialism, implies a significant alteration in the settler colonial process. As Ajl points out, the existence of liberal democracy does not signify the termination of settler colonialism. Nevertheless, the examined cases illustrate how the colonized people become less susceptible to the settler's ambitions and anxieties once the shift to neo-colonialism has occurred.

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ⁱ Quilombola are the descendants and remnants of communities formed by fugitive African enslaved people (the quilombos) between the 16th century and 1888.

ⁱⁱ The demise of these indigenous individuals can be attributed to the escalating disregard for healthcare by the government, the degradation of living conditions caused by illegal mining activities, such as the contamination of rivers with mercury, and direct conflicts with miners and other settlers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Baixada Santista is the name given to the metropolitan region of the city of Santos on the coast of the state of São Paulo, involving nine cities: Cubatão, Guarujá, Itanhaém, Mongaguá, Peruíbe, Praia Grande, Santos and São Vicente.

War, settler colonialism, and neocolonialism: An overview of South Lebanon under imperial assault

Karim Eid-Sabbagh¹

On October 8th, in solidarity with the Palestinian people and in expectation of the coming Israeli onslaught after the Palestinian resistance's Al Aqsa Flood breakout of the Gaza concentration camp, Hezbollah, the Lebanese resistance movement, launched attacks on Israeli outposts in the Israeli

occupied Lebanese Sheba farms territory on Jabal el Sheikh (Mt Hermon). Since then, the confrontation has engulfed the southern border area within a 15-20 km zone with occasional Israeli strikes 100 and more km north (fig 1.).

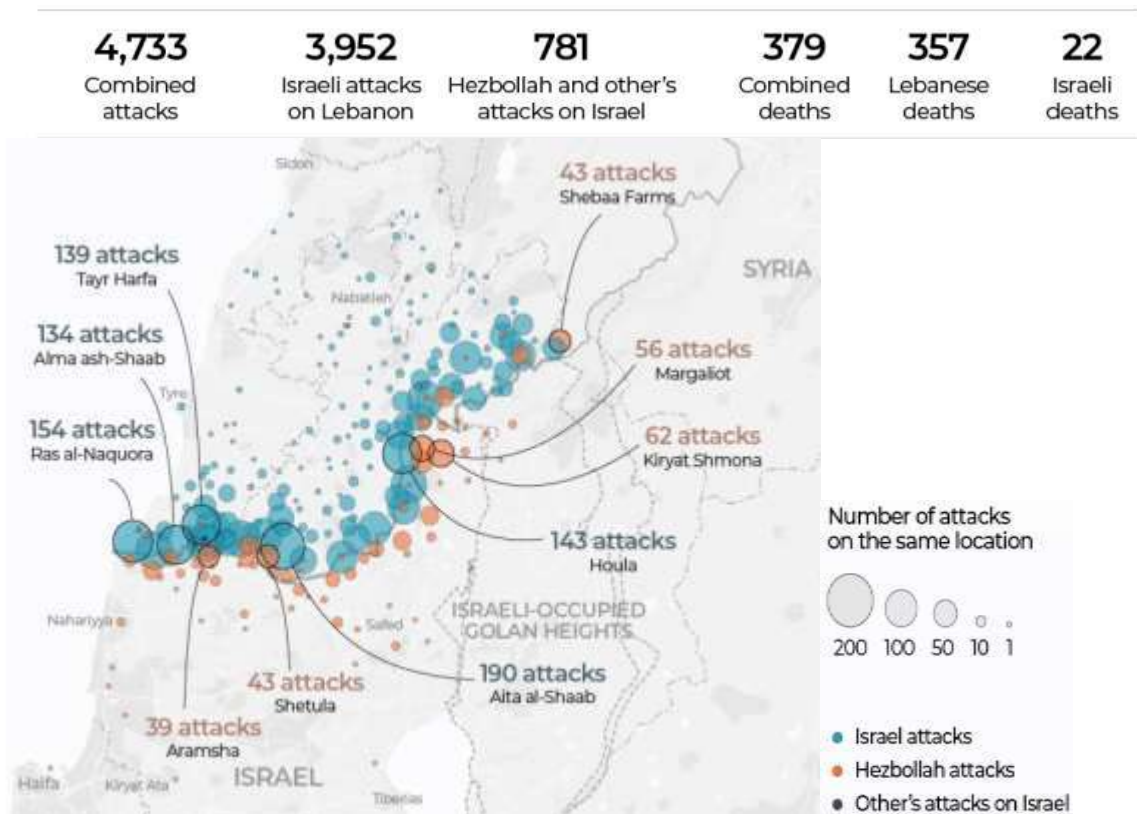


Fig. 1. Frequency of attacks by location and warring party until March 25 (Dhaby and Hussein, April 2024).

This border area has been a site of struggle and resistance since the early 20th century when European mandate powers divided the territories of the defeated Ottoman empire between them. In the following sketch I will show how the combination of imperial war, settler colonialism and neocolonialism combined in reveal a history of domination in the form of de-development (and resistance) in south

Lebanon. Yeros and Jha (2020) in their theorisation of neocolonialism, and Mao in his discussion of semi-colonialism recognise the importance of imperial war in the production of fractured states and the deepening of the neo-colonial situation. I will begin in the first section with a brief overview of the southern Lebanese experience of imperial assault. The next section sketches the Lebanese immediate

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interface with the Zionist settler-colonial formation, while the last section traces the development of neocolonialism in Lebanon in relation to the South.

De-development by imperial War

According to Ali Kadri, “the war on Gaza must be seen from the perspective of ratcheting up imperialist power in a strategic region. The whole history of colonising Palestine is an aggression aimed at severing Asiatic from African masses, leaving the spoils to Europe” (Kadri, 2024, p.149). This war and all the previous wars on Lebanon have to be understood in the context of the expansion and maintenance of imperial domination and the Oil-Dollar nexus, after the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement. This is certainly the point of view of Hezbollah. According to Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the Islamic resistance in Lebanon, “Washington is entirely responsible for the war in Gaza, while Israel is merely a tool” (The Cradle 2023).

Israel’s declared goal in the current war is to bring back its settlers to the northern settlements and remove Hezbollah forces from their immediate proximity. Israeli strategy to this end has been the devastation of the Lebanese border zone. Since October 7, about 450 people have been martyred (of whom 340 fighters) and about 94000 people have been displaced from about 100 border villages (IOM 2024). Israel has burned forests, fields and orchards by bombing with white phosphorus and dousing them in fuel. It has bombed border villages savagely. In more than 4000 attacks some 1000 Ha (10 M m²) of wood (600 Ha) and agricultural lands (400 ha) have been burned and poisoned by white phosphorus. An estimated 1000 buildings have been flattened and some 10000 damaged (Xinhua 2024).ⁱ

The destruction was and is aimed at these villages and their populations’ capacity for social reproduction. According to Ali Kadri, “war targets labour to obstruct its potential, or to arrest its ascent to command social reproduction” (2024, p. 149). Villages are destroyed, people displaced and

agriculture specifically targeted because they are important sources of income and subsistence for the people of the south. In the current war to date some 40,000 olive trees have been burned, at least 340 heads of cattle and 350,000 birds have succumbed to “Israeli” bombing.ⁱⁱ This brief enumeration illustrates well what Ali Kadri calls accumulation through waste, the shortening of lives and de-development through war. This wasting of lives and environment has been an essential aspect of “Israel’s” strategy.

The history of violent aggression on Lebanon and the South by Israel starts in 1948 with the Nakba, displacing some 100,000 refugees across the border.ⁱⁱⁱ De-development by war and occupation has been a constant since. Violence on Lebanese lands increased with the arrival of Palestinian resistance factions in the late 1960s and 1970s. By 1978 Israel occupied the villages along the border and in 1982 it invaded Beirut. It retreated gradually but continued to occupy the border strip until 2000. In 1993 and 1996 intense bombing campaigns lasted weeks and interrupted the lowlevel warfare against the resistance until the occupation armies fled in May 2000. In 2006 the 33-day war proved immensely destructive.

Zionism, settler colonialism and the marginalisation of south Lebanon

At a higher level of abstraction this process of de-development has always been imperial war aimed at the maintenance and enhancement of the security of the Zionist entity as an outpost of imperialism. Its settler-colonial character gives it ideological and historical content and has shaped the concrete geography of the border zone in very specific ways. Given the racial programming of the settler-colonial project and its hunger for land and resources across this border its militarisation can be said to have been inevitable.

The border was created as a result of the French and British carving up of the carcass of the Ottoman empire after World War I. French designs for a Greater Lebanon in which a Christian bourgeoisie would hold the reins and allow the mandate power to solidify its dominion in the area were one set

of interests shaping border negotiations. British imperial interest in Arab territories, coupled with a desire to manage the Jewish question, led to an adoption of the Zionist cause for the “creation of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” as per the 1917 Balfour declaration (Khalidi 2020).

In settler colonial fashion, Zionist leaders coveted the land and water resources of Jabal el Sheikh and the Litani River, but French desire to enlarge the labour reservoir for Christian Lebanese comprador capital disappointed these designs. The negotiations led to the Sykes-Picot agreement that drew the border along the geographic contours of the hilly regions of Jabal Amel, the Houle plain and Jabal el Sheikh. This border over the following three decades progressively hardened from a line on a map into a deadly barrier.^{iv}

The economic life of the pre-border southern part of Lebanon including Jabal Amel and the Arkoub was turned much more towards the Galilee, what is now northern occupied Palestine. What followed was a violent cleavage of the social reality connecting the north and the south. The towns of Bint Jbeil, Marjayoun and Hasbaya, in the newly formed Lebanon were important way-stations connecting Palestinian towns like Acre, Safed, and Haifa, to Tyre, Beirut, and Damascus. They formed the origins of the Mukari's ware^v trading in the rural areas. According to Hof (1984), “one of the few things that mitigated the poverty of the area was the ability of people to move freely, to graze livestock, sell produce and seek odd jobs for cash” (p.19).

Even if the border was only officially sealed with the 1953 Israeli revocation of the free movement agreement, the major traffic hubs of Marjayoun, Hasbaya, and Bint Jbeil had been transformed into backwaters of the Lebanese state by then. Whereas before there was through traffic and trade, now mobility was overall unidirectional towards the bigger cities of Saida and Beirut.

Settler-colonial ideology, Zionism, as well as European colonial interest were

crucial in the articulation of the geography of southern Lebanon and northern Palestine. The creation of the border cut the area off from its socio-economic fabric and transformed the northern side into a periphery. Meanwhile, the southern side was largely purged of its original inhabitants and integrated into the core of the imperialist world system.

As a result the Lebanese south would remain among the poorest regions in the country. This marginalisation as a form of de-development is in a large part a direct result of the creation of the settler-colonial state that de facto precluded any other possibility.

De-development settler colonial aspiration for land and water resources

The border was drawn along ridges disregarding local land use that extended village lands to streams and rivers to guarantee access to water. Seven villages on the most southern flank of Jabal Amel and their lands which had been culturally connected to the north were eventually definitively incorporated into the colonial state of Israel and severed from their social and economic body (Kaufman 2006, Hof 1984).^{vi} After partition the settler-colonial hunger for land and water resources remained a part of the Zionist state's intervention in south Lebanon, though not the main driver (see Zeitoun et al. 2012). During the occupation of the most southern strip of Lebanon starting in 1978 and lasting until 2000, it occupied the source of the Hasbani River, the tributary of the Upper Jordan River flowing from Lebanon. This prevented any major type of water resource development and thus secured additional water flows into Zionist occupied lands.

The Shebaa Farms, a territory on the flanks of Jabal el Sheikh, and the village of Ghajjar were also annexed by the settler state and remain under Israeli occupation until today.^{vii} Zeitoun et al. (2013) have shown that control over the surface watershed and the immediate proximity of the source of the Liddan River are additional reasons for Zionist retention of these territories. Similarly, the village Ghajjar oversees the Wazzani Springs and provides effective

control against Lebanese exploitation for use.^{viii}

The occupation of the seven villages, the Shebaa farms, as well as Ghajjar illustrate how the settler-colonial hunger for land and water resources (a central aspect of settler colonialism) continues to shape the reality of the south, even after the Israeli flight from the southern occupied territories. Finally, up to this day some Zionist settlers continue to advocate for occupation and settlement of the Lebanese areas south of the Litani river (Hamoud, 2024).

From Mandate to neocolonialism

Imperial war and settler colonialism were forces operating on South Lebanon from the south itself, but to understand neocolonialism's effects on South Lebanon one needs to focus north and inwards towards the capital. Corresponding to the elaboration of Yeros and Jha (2020), neocolonialism in Lebanon can be subdivided into early and late phases. Early neocolonialism lasted roughly from independence to the civil war and the late phase emerged in force in the post-civil war era starting in 1990 up until today. In this periodisation the war can be read as a transition period crucial to this transformation.

The mandate period, which was a non-settler form of colonialism defined by a combination of military and administrative colonial rule, lasted a little more than two decades. In this regard, Lebanon was early to decolonise. During the mandate much of the legal architecture for state building was articulated and the stage was set for the sectarian mode of governance, concentrating power with the Christian bourgeoisie.^{ix}

Lebanon gained formal independence from colonial control in 1943, but transitioned almost immediately into neocolonialism making it an early experiment in this form of imperialism. First French capital had the largest interest but eventually gave way to US dominance within a decade. Ideas of industrial-based growth were quickly sidelined by the increasingly powerful Western-aligned commercial/financial

bourgeoisie which maintained the outward orientation and dependency of the economy originating from the mandate period.

Challenged by burgeoning Arab Nationalism after the 1948 Arab defeat and rising socialist-oriented tendencies responding to growing social and economic crises, comprador elites strengthened their alliances with the US. By March 1957, “President Sham’un formally linked Lebanon to the Eisenhower Doctrine via a joint communique by the two governments and in May that year Sham’un organised national elections ‘bought for’ him by the CIA” (Traboulsi, 2007, p.132). A year later in July the Arabist uprising was quelled via US intervention, landing some 15,000 troops just south of Beirut in a show of force. Under US tutelage the head of the Army, Fuad Chehab, was transitioned to the presidency in the September elections and US troops left the country in October of the year.

This direct military intervention should not be interpreted as a shift to semi-colonialism as theorised by Mao (2004) because the US preferred indirect control. It supported the representatives of the comprador class serving its agenda of containing Arabist, Palestinian and socialist forces (George 2014; 2019). Eventually the sharpening contradictions of reactionary comprador rule and the regional political developments lead to the outbreak of the civil war in 1975.

The 1990 negotiated end of the civil war marks the completion of the transition into the late neocolonial stage. The civil war accelerated the process of fracturing the state that Yeros and Jha (2020) identify as being characteristic of the late phase of neocolonialism. The Taef Agreement that ended the war altered the sectarian matrix of power, dividing decision-making power between the three major sects (Maronite, Shia, Sunni) equally and made the country virtually ungovernable. It also produced a division of power within the country at the regional level. Syria negotiated control over large portions of the security apparatus as well as a continuing military presence for its acquiescence with the first US war on Iraq,

while economic power was put in the hands of a Saudi/Western-oriented comprador class led by Lebanese/Saudi billionaire Rafiq Hariri (Baumann 2016).

Under the leadership of the entrepreneur tycoon, pushed by the World Bank and bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, reconstruction of the damage left by 15 years of civil war and development took a radically neoliberal approach. Reconstruction and so-called development were financed via state debt to Lebanese banks at unsustainable interest rates,^x while state expenditures were less than efficient due to the fact that all competing political groups including the Syrian overseers had to be bought into this division of spoils. By the mid-nineties the state was caught in a debt-interest trap benefiting Lebanese and increasingly international financial capital while working-class organisation was actively crushed or when possible co-opted (Baumann 2016, Khater 2022). Bilateral and multilateral aid and development institutions increased their political and policy influence with the state's growing dependence on donor funding. Neocolonial control grew while at the same time Hezbollah profited from the security space provided by the Syrian military presence to improve its resistance capacities and maintain its guerilla war against the Israeli occupation.

Syria acted as final arbiter when consensus among Lebanese factions broke down and the political process stuttered in the early post-war period. With rising state debt the World Bank, IMF and other bi- and multilateral donors became more influential and assertive. The second Iraq war marked a turning point. Syria's refusal to open its airspace and Hezbollah's growing strength (marked by its successful liberation of the south) brought both back into the crosshairs of imperialism. The US and France collaborated in their efforts to disarm the resistance and force Syrian withdrawal. The assassination of the former prime minister Rafiq Hariri and the ensuing so-called Cedar Revolution prompted the withdrawal of Syria's 14,000 troops.^{xi} The political landscape split into two opposed camps.

One, called March 14, aligned with the West and its Gulf allies, the other, March 7, in opposition to it, including Christian and other parties allied with Hezbollah. Stripped of its former political cover Hezbollah has partaken in government ever since. The political contradictions intensified further with the 2006 Israeli onslaught. Heralding a period of further fracturing of the state, this was manifested in the almost complete breakdown of the political process^{xiii} and occasioned episodes of internal violent conflict with thousands of casualties.^{xiiii}

The 2006 war and specifically the reconstruction needs of the state reinforced the grip of donors and development agencies over the policy space. Since the war all ministries are dependent on donor funds for their operation and investment needs (Eid-Sabbagh 2015).

In 2016 a political coalition including Hezbollah came to power monopoly capital and donor support withdrew relatively rapidly and intensified the sanctions earlier put on Hezbollah and associated institutions and selected individuals. Within two years the debt-interest regime that had enriched the comprador class collapsed and a severe economic crisis lasting to the present day ensued.

Neocolonialism and de-development of the south.

In the early phase during the pre-civil war era, the capital and import trade centered development widened the gap to the central area around Beirut with the south. Uneven development coupled with the increasing imperial violence on the border region caused a massive rural exodus and social dislocation. Imperial war and neocolonial class politics complemented each other in the underdevelopment of the south. The occupation of the southern border region (corresponding roughly with the areas under attack by Israel today (see fig 1) and the 1982 invasion further accelerated rural urban migration. By 1990 much of the villages had seen migration rates ranging from over 50% reaching 90% (Faour 1994).

Liberation only briefly reversed this trend. The weight of neoliberal policy

reproduced the development pattern of the country. The agrarian crisis and related processes of semi-proletarianisation, state employment, as well as the construction sector provided partial incomes while subsistence agriculture and state-subsidised tobacco cash cropping (including massive profits to Big Tobacco) complemented these incomes.

The 2006 war intensified these processes but the inflow of international NGOs with reconstruction also offered new employment opportunities in the service sector. Similarly, the tripling of the troops of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in south Lebanon to around 15 000 (most of them from European armies)^{xiv} provided job opportunities but further accentuated social differentiation processes.

Notwithstanding the presence of these armies it would be misleading to characterise the situation in the south as semi-colonial. The contradictions entailed in neocolonial de-development in Lebanon, the Iranian revolution of 1979 to which the the creation of Hezbollah is organically linked, as well as the history of resistance to imperialism in the region in all its forms merged to create (some of) the necessary conditions for the emergence of this resistance movement. While the distinction between semi-and neocolonialism remains blurry, the contradictions of neocolonial governance and the anti-social-services politics that come with it allowed the Islamic resistance to thrive.

This process was and is itself fraught with contradictions, such as the sectarian politics that this necessarily entails and the at least partial support for the same neoliberal/neocolonial politics reproducing the fracturing of the state). The resistance has managed to build a social safety net for its public in the south and other areas of Lebanon. With the political and security protection of the Syrian state until 2005 and over forty years of resistance with the strategic support of Iran it has managed to create for itself substantial military capacities. Its military prowess grew with each engagement with imperialism, from liberation in 2000, the war in 2006, as well as after 2011 against the US contras in Syria and at present.

As a result it has created a space of sovereignty from which it has been able to take the initiative in the war with Israel.

The deterrence of the Lebanese resistance, in combination with the other members of the 'Axis of Resistance', has managed to contain the war to the border area and keep the larger Lebanese territories from a repetition of the massive destruction of 2006. While Israel has incessantly threatened all out war it has until now been unwilling and unable to engage in such. And while at present the possibility of a widening of the war to engulf all of Lebanon remains, Hezbollah has decisively contributed to the (probably) existential strategic degradation of the Zionist state opening the prospect for an end of the era of de-development described in this overview.

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ⁱ This approach is reminiscent of its strategy in 2006 - but on a smaller scale - Israel caused tremendous destruction in the Southern suburbs of Beirut and the southern border zone. Israelis killed 1149 Lebanese with a much larger number of injured. Some 15 000 homes were totally destroyed and some 130 000 damaged, transportation, electricity and water infrastructure were heavily damaged through the country but specifically in the south.

ⁱⁱ That targeting agriculture is Zionist strategy is well illustrated in "Israel's" concentrated effort to mine agricultural areas in 2006. In the last days of the war it littered the south with between 2.5-4 million cluster bomblets rendering fields and forest dangerous. This has since caused some 300 casualties.

ⁱⁱⁱ The area previously experienced tremendous violence. Punitive measures imposed by the French in reaction to the massacre of Ayn Ebel where approximately 100 people were killed served to assert mandate control. "Villages were bombarded and burned, Bint Jbeil for example saw massive destruction. The French imposed a heavy tax as a financial punishment of all southern villages in the amount of 100,000 golden pounds, thereby draining peasants' coffers for decades." Abisaab, R. J., & Abisaab, M. (2014, p.18). The 1936-1939 Palestinian revolt received support from the people of Jabal Amel. With the Nakba and the following war Zionist forces committed gruesome massacres in the border villages. The most infamous took place in the village of Hula burning down a building with

around a hundred captives - all men between 15-65 - killing them. The same village has seen tremendous destruction in the last seven months.

^{iv} The violent nature of the Zionist settler-colonial project became increasingly felt in the south via the gradual impermeability of the border. The 1936-39 Palestinian revolt affected southerners, southern support to Palestinians and increased smuggling prompted more rigorous border control. Attacks on the separation fence “Tegart’s Wall” increased to such a degree that military was posted to police the border. The decade that followed was interspersed with short bouts of violence. For example by World War II, a related British incursion into the south confronted Vichy-France troops.

^v Mukaris were the donkey-borne travelling merchants who formed the kind of nervous system of the area, providing such goods as tools, shoes, and cloth etc from artisanal production in the surrounding regions.

^{vi} Today the resistance targets military installations as well as targets in settlements erected on these lands from which the occupation army operates, making them effectively extensions of the military infrastructure.

^{vii} Its occupation is justified by “Israel” claiming it to be Syrian land in contradiction to Syrian and Lebanese claims. This border dispute finds its roots in French administrative delineations of Syrian and Lebanese mandate territory and ambiguities regarding tax records for this remote area.

^{viii} The 2002 Wazzani incident in which “Israel” threatened war if the Lebanese state developed a pumping station on the spring for a water network serving the surrounding villages further illustrates that water was always a consideration for the settler-colonial entity. The dispute was resolved through indirect negotiations but the pumping station hardly ever worked at capacity due to damages from war and the failure to maintain it.

^{ix} The division of parliamentary power was based on the 1932 population census that adjudicated 50% of seats to Christian sects. The president, who must be a Christian Maronite, was given extensive powers. This would be rectified after the civil war when the power of the President, the Prime Minister (Sunni) and the Speaker of Parliament (Shia) would allow each to block the political process.

^x Interest on treasury bills reached 44% in the time period between 1995-96 and average above 10-12% if not more for the last 30 years.

^{xi} French and US led efforts to produce a favorable outcome of the Lebanese presidential elections due in 2004 produced UNSCR resolution 1559 which called for “fair and free elections”, the withdrawal of all foreign forces, and the disarming of all militias..

^{xii} Close to half of this time the country has been without a functioning government, presidential elections were delayed on multiple occasions leaving the country without president. Interim governments with little lawmaking power kept the most minimal state operations running and at times parliament did not convene for extended periods.

^{xiii} For example, in 2007 the siege of the Nahr el Barid Palestinian refugee camp in north Lebanon, the May 2008 conflagration between Hezbollah and the Amal party on one hand and Mustaqbal (the then leading Sunni party) and its associated militias, as well as different conflicts related to the Syrian civil war between 2011 and 2016.

^{xiv} Almost three times the number that had been deployed along the border in 1978.

Queering Settler Colonialism: Gay Pornography in "Men of Israel" and the Nation-State as Sexual Desire

Amala Malaman¹ and Iago Rondelli

A Mediterranean sound accompanies the appearance of some rocky mountains on the screen. The film cuts from the mountains to the ruins of single-story houses, made of exposed stone and covered in vegetation. Between the branches it is possible to see, in the distance, cut-outs of contemporary cities, with white buildings and roads. The architecture of the ruins amidst the mountains is shown several times and the many open portals of these empty structures indicate a population presence that is no longer there.

Two muscular men appear in this uncrowded setting. They are holding hands, dressed in jeans and shorts, both shirtless and one of them with a tribal tattoo. They stop in front of the mountain landscape, and the camera records a kiss. In the next cut, both are already completely naked, kissing and grabbing each other excitedly, in the sandy interior of one of those empty houses in ruins. As one begins to suck the other, the volume of the music decreases. The sound of moans and sparse gasps in Hebrew follow the next 15 minutes of intense sex. Under the sunlight coming through the stone windows, their carefully tanned bodies gradually become sweaty. In the end, their ecstasy culminates in semen spurting over the actors and onto the house.

In a promotional video for the movie, the director comments on this sequence, which is the second complete sex scene from the 2009 pornographic feature film "Men of Israel":

We went to an abandoned village just north of Jerusalem. It was a beautiful ancient township that had been deserted centuries ago [...]

however, that did not stop our guys from mounting each other and trying to repopulate it. Biology may not be the lesson of the day but these men shot their seeds all over the village (apud Elia 2013).

In fact, the ruined town used as the scene setting was identified by viewers (and on the director's tip) as the ancient Palestinian village of Lifta, which has not been "deserted", much less "centuries ago". Lifta was one of the hundreds of Palestinian villages that suffered ethnic cleansing in 1948, in the process of creation of the State of Israel, which the Palestinians call the Nakba (Catastrophe, in Arabic). Far removed from the director's jocular tone, therefore, the choice to shoot a gay pornographic scene on the "set" in question is politically charged with the violent local colonial history. Similarly, the director's joke about gay sex as an initiative to repopulate the village cynically contributes to the ongoing erasure of the existence of its Palestinian inhabitants, alive to this day as refugees and resisting for decades in the fight for the right to return to their homes.

Before 1948, Lifta was among the largest Palestinian villages in the region of Jerusalem, with a population of almost three thousand people. During the Nakba, these Palestinians were expelled from their homes by Zionist militias and the newly formed Israeli Army. Unlike the vast majority of other depopulated Palestinian villages, however, Lifta was not completely destroyed, although the Western side of the village, which included two elementary schools, was demolished by Israeli authorities¹. Up to this day, Lifta remains as one of the most visual

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representations of the Palestinian social life destroyed by the Zionists, and as such, it continues to be the subject of dispute between the Israeli state and the local Palestinian families, expelled in 1948 and fighting for the right to return to their homes. It is within this context that the use of the village as a scenario for a movie called “Men of Israel” must be read.

This emblematic scene in the film and its connections with Palestinian colonial reality bring us to the main issue we seek to explore in this text. In the contemporary commercial aesthetics of sex produced in the pornographic film “Men of Israel” (2009), we can identify, through the very arousal of desire for gay bodies, elements of the construction of a favorable international political environment for the continuous colonial settler policy of the State of Israel. We thus start with the issues of the body and sexuality favored by queer analysis to propose a reflection on the connections between these issues and themes considered classic in International Relations, such as state formation and colonialism.

Porn cinema as contemporary settler-colonial politics

“Men of Israel” was produced in 2009 by Lucas Entertainment, one of the largest porn studios in the world (Van Meter, 2006). The film was conceived and directed by the company’s CEO, Michael Lucas. Lucas is Jewish, born in Russia, having immigrated to the USA and subsequently made *aliyah* to obtain Israeli citizenship (Kaminer, 2009). In interviews at the time of the film’s release, Lucas openly stated that the play was “free PR for Israel” (Kaminer, 2009). The film’s marketing informs us that it is the first gay porn film with a completely Israeli cast, a characteristic accentuated by the assignment of fantasy names to the actors (a common practice in commercial pornographic production) that visibly sought to sound authentically Israeli, such as ‘Avi Dar’ or ‘Matan Shalev’ (Britt, 2014). On the second disc of the double DVD, Michael Lucas included a documentary - analyzed below - in which he explains his motivations for producing the film and includes interviews

with the cast, where the actors discuss their lives as gay Israelis.

By populating scenes of gay sex amidst the natural scenery of the region (of “their land”), or in the transitions depicting everyday gay life in the ‘vibrant’ and ‘modern’ cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv, with recurring appearances of the white and blue flag, the film builds audiovisual support for the Zionist policy of colonizing Palestine. In other words, “Men of Israel” functions as an instrument that contributes to building an alliance between the State of Israel and gay rights defenders around the world (Britt, 2014). This process is reinforced by the director’s declared intention to forge a “pornographic stimulus campaign for gay tourism [to Israel]” (Kaminer, 2009).

The idea of such an action or marketing campaign is far from new. Social movements and academic literature have created the concept of pinkwashing precisely to describe this phenomenon. Pinkwashing refers to the practices of states, or private actors aligned with their policies, of carrying out public relations campaigns and branding strategies as a way of diverting attention from the broader ongoing human rights violations operated by them. These violations are thus “washed” by advertising and ostentatiously publicizing their good records in terms of “gay rights” or through the narratively constructed perception that they are “gay-friendly”. The State of Israel is an emblematic case in this regard, as for many years it has systematically promoted its own narrative of a positive track record in relation to gay rights, while at the same time discursively differentiating itself from Palestine and neighboring countries in the Middle East based on this criterion. It thus constructs a narrative of blatant and violent homophobia as the exclusive reality in these places.

Practices of pinkwashing such as “Men of Israel” only make sense - and most importantly only have an impact on international relations - in a global context characterized by neoliberalism and by what Jasbir Puar (2007) calls ‘homonationalism’. This concept refers to the neoliberal incorporation of specific gay identities and

bodies into a narrative that frames the world as one divided into “gay-friendly” and “homophobic” countries. Through this narratively constructed reality, practices of imperial and colonial subjugation by countries such as the United States and Israel are legitimized in the name of a fight against backwardness and barbarism.

By using government resources to build marketing and public relations initiatives in LGBT community spaces and activities around the world, the State of Israel thus incorporates sexual identity politics into its official foreign policy. However, this process is realized without altering the reality of systematic colonization of Palestinian territory, which takes the form of countless violations of the Palestinians' human rights, especially their right to life, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. A nuanced and critical picture of the characteristics of these pinkwashing practices can be found in the dialogue that Puar & Mikdashi (2012) establish with Maikey & Schotten (2012), where they also present reflections on anti-pinkwashing activism, which has been called "pinkwashing" as it has emerged within global social movements in recent years.

As Britt (2014) suggests, the intriguing question that the film "Men of Israel" raises is: "how does this film's melding of public same-sex desire, erotic imagery, landscape and symbols of the State of Israel build these alliances?". In other words, in what ways does Israeli pinkwashing also take place on other levels and in other forms of effectiveness through an overtly sexual/pornographic aesthetic, and how does this variation of pinkwashing articulate with and contribute to settler colonial politics? We would like to present some notes stimulated by this question, arranged in relation to some keys of analysis dear to queer thought.

Firstly, the way in which the body and sexuality impose themselves on the analysis of the political situation provoked by the release of the film is striking. Britt (2014) states that, in "Men of Israel", the filmed sexual performance intentionally produces ideas associated with the sexuality of

racialized bodies in the disputed territory of Palestine, thus reinforcing a hierarchy between Israelis and Palestinians based on criteria of sexual practices that are supposed to be known. The materiality of the body in relation to the political situation (the colonial occupation of Palestine) reinforced by the film makes us think of a comparison between: (1) the structuring policy of forced population displacement and military and paramilitary control of the land and movement of Palestinians, from the beginning of colonization to its current forms today; and (2) the attraction of the "LGBT" or global gay population as tourists, therefore with free transit throughout the region of historic Palestine, according to Israeli law. This situation is made possible by the neoliberal normalization of gay identity (Duggan, 2002, 2003; Naze, 2017), which allows a "gay subject" anywhere in the world to identify with Israeli gay life as it is narrated, and to want to experience (including sexually) what is portrayed in the film, even by traveling to Israel.

In this text, we propose that Israeli pinkwashing, and particularly its expression in pornographic productions such as "Men of Israel", should be understood as an integral part of the settler colonialism practiced by the Jewish state over the Palestinian territories. The notion of settler colonialism here does not refer to a sequence of past historical events, but rather to a "structure" that is reproduced and updated over time (Wolfe, 2006), a "system of institutional and personal relationships" (Veracini, 2006p.1) whose strategic objective is to populate the territory with certain bodies, while at the same time eliminating the native body from the land. It is in this sense that Israel's settler colonialism is not restricted to policies of displacement, restrictions on movement, genocide or arbitrary arrests, in which the colonial dimension is more explicit. Equally central to this settler colonial structure are less obvious practices, such as the production of an official historiography or the renaming of historical sites. It is within this broad colonial structure that gay pornographic productions

such as "Men of Israel" are inserted: they present Israel as an international ally of these populations and, moreover, they construct the Israeli state, territory and body as objects of sexual desire.

Thus, the attraction of a flow of gay, or even LGBT, tourists carried out by a tourism policy (whether state-led or not) aimed at these bodies, can be seen as one of the ways of reproducing the colonial structure that sustains the Zionist project. Although the transit of tourists in itself does not (necessarily) mean their settlement on colonized land, the consolidation of these political alliances at an international level must be considered a strategic part of the formation of the State of Israel, insofar as it feeds the global sense of legitimacy of the practices of land grabbing, annexations and the creation of new Zionist settlements. In other words, Zionist pinkwashing, in its different expressions, articulates the neoliberal incorporation of mainstream gay identities with its own national project, helping to sustain the legitimacy of the colonial settler state itself, as well as its practices.

In the light of queer discussions about politics and knowledge, it is also worth noting the calculated role of the production of a "documentary" about Israeli gay life, which accompanies the pornographic film in discussion. The documentary's tone is one of complete depoliticization of the context of colonial occupation in the film, in favor of producing a reality that can be apprehended as desirable by an international audience. This is the aim of this video which, as the director states, seeks to be "free PR for Israel". A piece like this would never choose to represent Palestinian voices, like a gay Palestinian who lives in Haifa and has Israeli citizenship. In this sense, Puar reminds us in "Citation and Censorship: the politics of talking about the sexual politics of Israel" (2011) that the modulation of what and how we talk about Israeli gay life is a very well-designed political issue aimed at the support of Zionist ideology. It is precisely through the apparent apolitical promotion of a specific

gay identity, thus, that pinkwashing produces its very political - and colonial - effects.

Thinking about the places of the aesthetics of/in politics, we can reflect on how Lucas Entertainment's commercial porn film advances in relation to conventional cinema of other genres, where we also find examples of pinkwashing. This increased aesthetic-political potential of "Men of Israel" can be understood insofar as it involves image and sound manufactured not only to construct a narrative, but to effectively excite a desire for the "gay Israeli" body. Crucially, this body is constructed as an explicit extension of the State of Israel itself - whose name appears in the very title "Men of Israel" and whose flags populate the scenes. The state is thus desired. In this construction of the nation-state as a sexual fetish, cinematic pornography becomes an important element in the reproduction of settler-colonial necropolitics.

In a lecture entitled "Imagination as power", part of the program for the 2020 Tiradentes Film Festival in Minas Gerais, Brazil, Helena Vieira (2020) comments that the experience of deeply embodied interaction between spectator and film, usually through the practice of masturbation, is a notable part of the specific mechanism of pornographic cinema. Porn cinema is not just about the audiovisual product itself, which is "impermeable". On the contrary, it is made, it happens, to the extent that those who watch it are also effectively participating in the movie: their bodies in masturbation (or in interaction with other(s) with whom they watch) and the movie on the screen are one and the same experience. The porn film is a film that, Vieira points out, "affects and communicates with the body in such a way that it produces pleasure", and it is in this practical interaction with the body that pornographic cinema effectively comes to life - its process doesn't end with the film as it leaves the studio.

Helena Vieira is commenting on the language of porn from the point of view of the average films in the genre, which do not pay much attention to narrative. However, we should think here about how this

mechanism of pornography described by her has the capacity to proliferate deeply political effects in the case of a film as ideologically and narratively charged as "Men of Israel". Pornographic cinema goes beyond other practices typical of Israeli pinkwashing - such as tourist advertisements announcing a gay-friendly destination, for example - by directly affecting the viewer's body. Arousal and embodied sexual desire thus become active elements in a complex colonial structure, contributing to the formation of global alliances and the legitimization of the Zionist project.

Final considerations: semiotics and the politics of normalization

Paul Preciado (2018) conceptualizes the 'pornographic' dimension of what he calls the current "pharmacopornographic era" of global capitalism as a function of the rampant and massified semiotic production of entertainment (a word or idea in fact present in the very name of the producer of *Men of Israel*). This "pornopower" acts through the arousal of desire as the main contemporary form of political control over bodies. It is in this sense that, as we suggested above, the production of a porn film can be thought of in terms of its semiotic and political potential on a global level. In the case discussed here, the bodies of the spectators, their desires, are mobilized and urged to act and position themselves politically in alignment with colonial necropolitics, as the State of Israel is constructed to produce gay identification - but also arousal and orgasm.

"Men of Israel" is a vivid expression of several layers of normalization made possible in global times marked by neoliberal capitalism and homonationalism. It represents the incorporation of previously marginal identities by the neoliberal and colonial state, which then legitimizes the other exclusions upon which this same state

is built. In this sense, the best-selling commercial porn film mobilizes a standardization of the desirable male body as a marketing element, albeit within the "multiculturalist" paradigm: supposedly inclusive, but which more concretely conceals structures of racialization and subjugation. In this case, as already mentioned, a particular Israeli body symbolizes the condition of access to a gay sexuality desired in this territory by the global viewer, and the images promoting the film that illustrate this text can help the reader understand which specific body this is.

Studio pornography constructs gay sex within formal sexual scripts that are repeated to exhaustion and provide the narrow framework of possibility for homosexual desire. We can then think of the ways in which there is a process of erotic standardization that accompanies the rise of gay normalization, so-called "citizenship" and the rhetoric of gay (or LGBT?) "rights". All these processes produce a resizing of margins: the alignment of these bodies with the neoliberal nation-state formulates a gay neoliberal subjectivity in which, as Puar (2007) points out, an ethical alliance with marginalized bodies in the global geopolitical and colonial dynamic - bodies which are almost always in relations of greater subordination and resistance towards the nation-state and the international system - significantly loses its potential for realization. Through the practice of pinkwashing, thus, Israel strengthens and legitimizes its own colonial purposes:

Historically speaking, settler colonialism has a long history of articulating its violence through the protection of serviceable figures such as women and children, and now the homosexual" (Puar, 2013, p.338).

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Lula 2023: the sign of the settler state constraints in Brazil

Bernardo S. Muratt¹

Although victorious, the Worker's Party (PT) and the Brazilian left are far from winning the hearts and minds of significant strata of the population. The January 8th coup attempt – with many similarities to the invasion of the United States Capitol – despite its failure, has shown that the government would face a turbulent period of existence. The Federal Supreme Court did not dig deep to establish the masterminds of the coup – among politicians, police and the military. It only imprisoned ordinary participants of the coup instead of its true motivators and perpetrators.

The house of representatives is conservative, with Lula adopting a very cautious approach thus preserving the status quo. In spite of this, there seems to be two main lines of action under his ongoing presidential term of office. One is more popular, based on Lula's own declarations and wishes, while the other one is strongly neoliberal yet masked with leftism and is headed by the Finance Minister Fernando Haddad.

One might think that such contradictions are a tactic of just letting the bourgeoisie have a little of its way while the left prepares terrain to put in motion its own action plan. But in reality, such action resides on PT's disregard of Brazilian class struggle. This phenomenon has happened before, and we will most likely see it again, because this is not a tactic, in fact it represents lack of strategy. Focusing mostly on elections, the Worker's Party does not build a political strategy, but concentrates on the electoral tactic every two years. This lack of strategy and, consequently, tactics is based on one historical and material constraint rooted deep within Brazil that many in the left choose to ignore: the neocolonial white settler society. This dominance has always imposed constraints in any sort of nationalistic

popular political programme attempted throughout Brazilian history.

A brief history of Brazilian white-settler social formation

One cannot conceive of the Brazilian ruling class without considering the European expansion to the South-American continent, the destruction of the natives and the settlement of a white ruling colonial strata was a project of European expansion. From 1530 until 1822, Brazil was under colonisation proper, although in 1808 it had opened its trade with other countries by Portuguese decree that transferred the court to Rio de Janeiro. Independence maintained the colony's accumulation patterns, based on large estates and slave labour hence maintaining white settler dominance and state building. With the prohibition of the slave trade in 1850, the system based on slavery began to decline, gradually giving way to capitalist patterns of accumulation. At the same time, they fought for independence and won one, although not really a national one, but a settler one, and also fighting against the Europeans. The vast majority of the Brazilian population had little to no rights whatsoever and remained enslaved upon independence. After the end of slavery, in 1888, a huge proletariat was formed, thus further intensifying Brazilian capitalism. Slavery was at its final moments, dependent capitalism was taking its place. (Moura, 2014)

During periods of crisis in the capitalist core such as the 1929 crash, the Brazilian white-settler social formation was able to reinforce its state-building and economy, having more control over the production and starting its own industrialisation. After WW2 and a brief democratic period, there was a coup d'état in 1964 – actively supported by the west (specifically the United States of America (USA)). This was a moment when the white-settler hegemony in Brazil was being

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increasingly questioned by popular nationalistic forces over the correct pathways for capitalist development. The military represented the bourgeoisies, the conservative strata and imperialism; those sectors had lost political control, and could only obtain it back through force, and so they did. The military dictatorship lasted for twenty years and during this period there was another attempt at white-settler industrialisation- this time with technology from the core. A type of developmentalism that relied heavily on imports of technology and a heavily oppressed and poorly paid working class which was mostly black.

It must be kept in mind that the vast majority of the Brazilian population still had no political rights and continued to be heavily exploited by this capitalist arrangement between the core and Brazilian white-settler bourgeoisie. At the end of the day, the military coup that took place was a demonstration of the limits of bourgeois democracy that had been imposed by the white-settler model (as it would happen again in 2016 as discussed below). This would be the country's social reality until the end of the military dictatorship in 1985.

In 1988 with a new constitution, Brazil couldn't stop the neoliberal impetus. The biggest Brazilian companies would go through financialisation, obtaining short term operating profits, diminishing their inversion on the productive side of business (Almeida and Belluzzo, 2002). Furthermore, in the late 90's and early 2000s the neoliberal government pushed a law to impose neoliberalism within the Brazilian legal system. With changes in international capitalism in the 1970s, a change in the understanding of the public budget was encouraged to guarantee the remuneration of capital. In the 1980s, this factor was combined with neoliberal rhetoric against the State. The purpose of the public deficit is to guarantee private investment to the detriment of public investment and, consequently, social rights. Gradually, removing from the public debate the possibility of controlling and deliberating the State's budget and resources in a broad way.

The legislation then begins to guarantee this new function of the State, guaranteeing accumulation led by the principles of financial capital. This is contrary to what was achieved by the principles of the 1988 democratic constitution. The Fiscal Responsibility Law (LRF), therefore, represents a movement of strength by financial capital in the legal system that dates back to the 1970s. And in 2000 it began to illegalize the public deficit, most notably removing the budget from public deliberation (Bercovici and Massonetto, 2006).

The 2016 coup and the limits of the neocolonial setting

PT from 2002 onwards had considerable political stability and implemented a series of income transfer policies. Surfing on the high tide of the commodities boom, Lula was able to revive some of the Brazilian industry such as petrochemical, naval and construction. However, his successor, Dilma Rousseff – elected in 2010–, wasn't so lucky and was elected when the boom was fading, but the social benefits structure was maintained.

This was also after the financial crisis of 2008 (Bastos, Hiratuka, 2017). In order to reestablish their economy the imperialist triad countries – United States, Europe and Japan – had a massive exportation boom to the south that was detrimental to Brazilian industry. There were also other problems: as the minimum wage was raised above productivity, there was the need of outsourcing (which was not legal in Brazil at the time) so a distributive conflict was taking shape. With some improvement in the livelihood of the working class, the result was a shorter margin of profits for the industry and ideological rage against the poor for most Brazilian elites. This resulted in a civil-parliamentary coup d'Etat in 2016 that impeached Dilma Rousseff.

The Industry Federation of the State of São Paulo (FIESP) – the biggest in the country, thought by PT to be a progressive nationalistic force – was in favour of the coup in this context of distributive conflict and considering its

alignment to the oligopolies that rule Brazilian economy since the late 1980s, this was only natural. The coup, put the neoliberal vice-president, Michel Temer (his position as vice-president is a result of concessions to the right) into power was followed by a deepening of neoliberalism, privatisation and precarisation of the public services, a public expenditure “roof” that was soon regarded as an unbreakable law that persists until this day.

In order to understand how the political and economic crises combined, we need to comprehend the context of the international political economy. The Brazilian milieu within globalised capitalism fits into what Yeros and Jha (2020) call late neocolonialism. Under a context of neoliberalism in the Center and monopolistic dominance in the periphery. The pressure from the neoliberal Core on the peripheries is the advance of late neocolonialism that leaves its mark on peripheral nations, including Brazil. The need for monopoly capitalism to drain the wealth of the South makes minimally nationalist projects, such as the Brazilian one from the 2000s, an impediment to the reproduction of the central bourgeoisies. At the same time, the growing control of financial capital by the Core, added to the already mentioned financialization of Brazilian industry, translates into bourgeois “compradorisation” (Yeros and Jha, 2020). The advance of fascism from this context is yet another anti-national response to the impasses that exist in Brazil, which will materialise itself through Bolsonaro's electoral victory.

Lula was also arrested in 2018, making Bolsonaro's victorious election, in the same year, possible. Bolsonaro was even more ferocious in his neoliberal endeavour, but his attitude towards the covid pandemic was his weakness, that made Lula – now freed with the annulment of his arrest – win the 2022 election. If after the dictatorship there was a difficult context in politics and state building to fight neoliberalism, in 2022 the situation is even worse. The measures imposed by the Brazilian right, in line with the organic needs of the capitalism of generalised monopolies (AMIN, 2018), in a

recessive context in the Triad countries are harder to surpass.

Despite Lula's victory, the neoliberal agenda was mostly kept. Other conservative measures adopted since the 2016 coup were also kept. For instance, the “high school reform” dismantled the base of secondary education in Brazil. The government, in January 2024 made a commission to reconsider the tributary exempt for evangelical pastors after the reaction of the (ultra far-right) evangelical stand in Congress. Following talks with Finance Minister, Fernando Haddad, the evangelicals were confident of a reversion, the topic still under discussion in Brasília.

In spite of all these factors mentioned above, the economy showed growth, although probably for a limited time, but that didn't stop the industrialist call for further neoliberalization. The National Industry Confederation launched a 200 page document “Plano De Retomada Da Indústria” or Industry Resumption Plan, in May 2023. It claimed a “new strategy, focused on innovation, decarbonisation, social inclusion and sustainable growth.”. The document asks for a further deepening of a 2017 labour reform basically exempting the industries of any responsibility for labour accidents on commuting, risks of shut down because of compliance inadequacies, and worsening of the medical assistance in workers (CNI, 2023). That's their idea of social inclusion.

In mid-January this year, Brazilian government, led by Vice-President and Industry and Development Ministry, Geraldo Alckmin, launched a new industrialisation plan called “Nova Indústria Brasil”. The whole plan will be based on a 300 billion BRL investment in different areas but mostly technology and green energy. Basically all of this by making the State a huge player again. Of course, some of the main problems and contradictions of Brazilian capitalism were not addressed such as the need for agrarian reform and the influence, to say the least, of the Triad countries on Brazilian capitalism. Nonetheless it is an interesting plan through which the Brazilian

neocolonial State will likely be pushed to its limits again. However, there are a few points to consider:

The plan is led by a man who once was the main representative of conservative neoliberal agenda in Brazil, seen in the 2022 election as a necessary evil for calling some of the conservative electorate to Lula's side. Secondly, if history is anything to abide by, the Brazilian Industrial bourgeoisie might as well support the plan initially, but it's not clear if they do that in order to get their hands on government inversions or based in a true "developmentalist" intent. I tend to believe the first rather than the latter. We have seen this problem before, and since 2014 to 2023, at least, the main industrial entities such as FIESP, CNI (National Industry Confederation) and IEDI (Studies Institute for Industrial Development) – CNI is the confederation composed by every Brazilian state industrial federation; IEDI is an private institute composed by the biggest Brazilian industry owners – are calling for less secure labour relations and an international alignment to the United States, Europe and Japan as a way of obtaining industry competitiveness.

If one takes CNI's plan for industrialisation as a basis, one will notice some very important remarks, such as an ever deeper labour reform, and an overall worsening of the conditions for the working class. All and all trying to rip more benefits that would be paid by the working class. This plan does not hold a big difference if compared to the 2015 plan made by IEDI, called "how to escape the crisis", written amid the impeachment process that held same basic premises: diminishing labour rights, cutting social "expenditures", and Brazilian industry's integration on the current global value chains (GVCs) by tightening the bonds between Brazil and the Triad, in hopes of obtaining technology.

This is not new: if western economists such as Susan Strange (2015) felt sorry for a "Casino Capitalism" that had its beginnings after the 1970's crisis, it seems that Brazilian white-settler bourgeoisie also seems to long for a world, before the 70's

economic crash, where there were transfers of outdated industry from the core to the periphery's selected few, Brazil among them. Its so-called "economic miracle" was made with foreign capital, poor and black worker's repression and a massive increase in income inequality. A grotesque and forgotten part of the Bretton Woods system which was the reality for the working people of the global south.

Conclusion

The State inherited from the dictatorship in the democratic period had all sorts of limitations due to neoliberalism and the current trend of monopoly capitalism at the time. In this sense there was not much to do without a fierce political struggle. In the 1990s there were changes in the Brazilian legal system making neoliberalism a law (LRF). PT tried to change some aspects of this State but without facing the main structural neoliberal obstacles, even so it was ousted from government. After the coup, a neoliberal deepening happened, and with Bolsonaro it worsened, not only on the economic side, but also the ideological and conservative aspects of it. Now, Brazilian progressive forces (lead by PT) inherited an even worse state, way more neoliberal, with more and more ideological e political power to the conservative spectre. Now, without a favourable economic outset, with a bigger crisis of finance monopoly capital and imperialist offensive PT hasn't changed its ways, and is still doing the same movements as in early 2000s while hoping for different results. This sort of politics might well work in the short term, and perhaps it will help on the electoral goals, but what we can foresee in the long run is a serious deepening of neoliberalism that had started in the 90s and the diminishing field of action and leverage of the progressive movements.

Once again PT is attempting to meet the demands of the white-settler Brazilian bourgeoisie, but it fails to grasp the harsh reality; once PT's project of better wages and boasting of the internal market becomes an obstacle for the white-settler bourgeoisie it will suffer a backlash. The bourgeoisie will use politics, media and

violence to achieve its goal as it once did and as still does. There will be growth, there will be some welfare improvement, but to a lesser extent after the expenditure roof As soon as

this arrangement benefits workers in a better way (to the white-settlers mind that is) it will be stopped and it will likely be overthrown.

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The Land Question in South Africa's 6th Democratic Election

Mnqobi Ngubane¹

South Africa was to hold its 6th democratic election on 29th May 2024. It had been 30 years that country gained freedom from more than 300 years of colonial white settler rule. Freedom from apartheid. During the Mandela years, 1994-1999, the democratic government under the leadership of the liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC), embarked on a redistributing of 30% farmland to Black South Africans. By the year 2024, a total of about 72% of the country's total farmland remained owned and controlled by white commercial farmers, many of whom were descendants of white settlers. The question of the day was, why had the ruling party failed to redistribute farmland in a democracy it had fought for more than a century, since its formation in 1912? This was no mystery. Neoliberal land reform embraced from the Mandela years was a seedbed for conserving private property, through the willing buyer, willing seller land reform. This meant that only willing white landowners could offer their land to the market, and the state may purchase it for redistribution to Black people. The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), and the less popular Freedom Front Plus upheld private property rights, and the conservation of white landownership in South Africa, adamantly right into the 2024 election. This was reflected in their election manifestos, and political slogans. "Fixing South Africa" from the ruins of the ANC reverberated in their political philosophies in ways that gravely appeared tentative to apartheid nostalgia. The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a breakaway party from the ANC, still retained their "land and jobs" slogan into the 2024 elections. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) had not taken a clear stance for land redistribution for reasons explained later. The new Umkhonto Wesizwe Party, a breakaway from the ANC wanted to return

the land to traditional leaders. The land question stances of these political parties are critically reflected upon in this piece, drawing from their manifestos, political slogans, philosophies, and their political traction histories or track records within a world historical moment of the year 2024.

African National Congress (ANC)

The ANC had been the ruling party of the day by the year 2024. This is the liberation movement of Nelson Mandela, of Winnie Madikizela Mandela, and many other powerful South African politicians that had, by then, passed away. The ANC's 2024 election manifesto foregrounded job creation and industrialization as top priorities. Land redistribution and tenure reform only featured marginally as a sub-theme of priority two: "Build our industries for an inclusive economy". The ANC stated that they would:

"Accelerate land reform and redistribution to reduce asset inequality and protect the security of tenure, improve food security and agricultural production, promote rural and urban development, and enable greater access to housing."

This seemed the least radical stance the ANC had ever taken on the land question. In simple terms, the ANC assured white landowners that most of their land will remain untouched in perpetuity. Marginal land reform would take place, and land inequality reduced only minimally to ensure food security against the backdrop of food security scaremongering should the land be returned to Black people.

Outstanding land restitution and labour tenant claims were not mentioned in the ANC 2024 election manifesto. Was the ANC missing the point about its constituencies? The latter included Black people with outstanding land claims. Such

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neglect seemed to stunt the deepening of democracy in rural areas. Outstanding labour tenant claims were a case on point (Levin & Ngubane, 2023). By 29 May 2024, a total of about 10,000 labour tenant claims remained unresolved. Former labour tenants were families of former resident farm servants, many of whom still resided on marginal parts of white-owned farms in 2024. On these farms they faced restrictions on their farming, housing, and access to state services such as schools, clinics, water, and electricity. Many faced threats of eviction, whilst more than three million, and counting, had been evicted by white landowners in the democratic order, since 1994 (NKA/SSA 2005).

It was obviously shameful that evictions of Black people by the white landed elite had occurred in post-apartheid South Africa and were still ongoing. This could have been reversed, and millions of evictees could have been allocated their land back. This had occurred in some parts of the country, such as outside Greytown, Kwazulu-Natal (Yeni 2024). There former labour tenants were violently evicted by a white farmer in 1997. They reclaimed their land by occupying it again on 17 April 2008, whilst the state followed with formal land redistribution processes (*ibid*). Elsewhere, former labour tenants who had been allocated farmland by the state had seen their lives improve and lifted themselves out of poverty towards economic prosperity via livestock sales in ceremonial markets (Ngubane 2020, Hornby 2014).

It seemed imperative for the ANC, if they retained power post 2024 elections, to consider settling outstanding labour tenant land claims and land restitution claims. This could potentially set land beneficiaries on upward trajectories of wealth accumulation. This can be operationalized concurrently with the reversal of farm evictions since 1994. Millions of Black people could see themselves reoccupying farmland from which they had been evicted by the white landed elite. This could be the first step towards decolonization in South Africa (Mayende 2022).

I have researched outstanding labour tenant land claims in South Africa, as well as trained social movement activists in conducting this research. This has supported the Office of the Special Master of Labour Tenants appointed by the Constitutional Court to fast-track labour tenant land claims via the Land Claims Court or negotiation. Together with Professor Richard Levin, the Special Master, we've conceptualized this work as deepening democracy in rural areas (Levin & Ngubane, 2023). Our findings show that former labour tenants still living on white-owned land want to regain the land they have lost over time and space. They aspire to acquire bigger pieces of land for expanded agricultural production and to enjoy the land of their ancestors (Phyllis, 2022). Their hopes and dreams continue being shattered by recalcitrant white landowners who frustrate and even block their land claims. The white landed elite have also made sure to infiltrate the state and entrenched conservative ideology on the part of state officials – that black people cannot farm and, therefore, should not be given the land back. We've tried to unsettle this myth in Levin & Ngubane (2023). The South African Communist Party (2022) has also intervened intellectually to promote the idea of a pro-working class land redistribution in South Africa.

The Democratic Alliance (DA)

Apart from the landowners, market-led land reform enjoys strong support from centre-right political formations such as the Democratic Alliance (DA) and those on the far right such as the Freedom Front Plus, which are regarded as having traditionally close links to the large white landowning class (Mayende 2022:223).

By 2024, the DA constituted mainly white South African citizens. Many of them were born during apartheid and benefitted from it - 100% of these white South African citizens haven't had the pressure whatsoever to pay reparations for apartheid. Instead, the white business elite and the white farming

elite have benefitted from neoliberal privatization since the early 1990s. They have also successfully convinced the ANC that they're better farmers in contrast to black land reform beneficiaries. They often grab back the land reform farms in acts that resemble counter-agrarian reform (Bellisario 2006). After grabbing back land reform farms, they generally pay below market rent to the emerging impoverished landed property in South African land reform (Ngubane 2020).

“Blacks can't farm” is a sounding message the white farming elite have indoctrinated in South African food security scare-mongering discourse (Mayende 2022). Long story short, the DA is conservative when it comes to land reform. Theirs is the protection of private property rights in perpetuity, regardless of the arbitrary acquisitions of such property rights, such as Black land dispossessions during colonialism and apartheid. Many of their members own land and some mines. Many of their members and supporters have sold farms and moved to urban areas enjoying the wealth accumulated from the farms by the previous generations of white settlers. Should the DA win any elections in democratic South Africa, the land question is most likely to be erased for the efficient white farmer or a few black farmers who adhere in mind and soul to white authority. That trajectory would resemble that of the United States, a former white settler country whose agricultural production is dominated by white people on the land that used to be owned by communities of indigenous people.

The true colour of the DA is their indifference to the continued genocide against Palestinians waged by the white settler state of Israel. The latter has been vehemently opposed by the ANC. Now the ANC needs to clean its own back door and recognize the racially determined suffering of millions of Black people that have been uprooted and evicted, often violently, from white-owned farms since 1994. They remain concentrated, concentration camp style, in shacks across the country in absolute poverty (NKA/SSA 2005). On this note, the ANC

needs to ask themselves to what extent Israelites own land in South Africa and to explore the depth and political implications of Israeli supporters within the white landed elite of South Africa.

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)

By the 2024 election, the EFF was the second-largest opposition party after the DA. They had centred land and jobs in their election campaign. But the EFF's recent voting against land expropriation without compensation in parliament seemed controversial. That left many left-wingers speechless.

Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)

The IFP's position on land, at least at its political base, in the province of Kwazulu-Natal, had been lukewarm and certainly unrevolutionary. By the 2024 election, the IFP's greatest leader and former ANC member had passed away. Questions remained about the mining and land deals between the old Zulu government, that he headed, and the landed white elite. This included the land, particularly along the north coast of Kwazulu-Natal, to the South of Mozambique. Most of that land had mining, sugar, and timber plantations, nature reserves, wetlands, and cattle ranches. Some, if not most was state-owned by 2024, most likely to be privatized, whilst the IFP mourned Shenge's passing.

Mkhonto Wesizwe (MK)

The Umkhonto Wesizwe recently formed party appeared they could do very well in Kwazulu-Natal province in the 2024 elections. President Jacob Zuma appeared revengeful against the ANC for imprisoning him on corruption charges aggravated circumstances, just like President Lula of Brazil. But Zuma's plea for ANC members not to leave the ANC for Umkhonto Wesizwe showed his deep attachment to the ANC, an unbreakable umbilical cord he was willing to die for during the liberation struggle. The ANC and Umkhonto Wesizwe political party were most likely to form a coalition after the 2024 election, particularly in Kwazulu-Natal. The MK election manifesto advocated the return of the land to

traditional leaders, *Amakbosi*. But their juxtaposition of this to the British monarch appeared problematic for all the bloodshed the British unleashed in its former colony, South Africa – this seemed unadmirable at all, for the land needed to be returned not to individuals but to people and communities that form constituent parts of the people.

What needed to be done?

The ANC was most likely to retain power, again from the 2024 elections, into the foreseeable future. Unlike new opposition parties, which had attracted uncritical opportunists eyeing state accumulation, the ANC had state institutional experience as part of its kernel and a track record of liberating South Africa from a gruesome apartheid system. The ANC had 30 years of experience in governance power. Regarding land, the ruling party had overseen and managed state infrastructure within the land ministry – datasets of land claims and records of settled land claims. Should a conservative party, such as the DA, win any election in the democratic order, land reform administration infrastructure might be destroyed, distorted, or used to reverse land reform in favour of the white farming elite. Should a newcomer, if not juvenile, party take over, it might not have at its disposal the historical and theoretical administrative capacity to operationalize the deepening of democracy by resolving the land question.

It seemed the ANC needed to lose the party's neoliberal advisors and resuscitate the in-house ideas of Govan Mbeki with regard to the land question. But without political pressure from below, such as that had been demonstrated by Abahlali Basemjondolo, a state-centric urban land occupation movement of South Africa, the ANC looked incapacitated to resolve the land question.

The ANC's political radicalism seemed to have been significantly dampened by neoliberal conservative forces that have managed to get into the belly of the state blocking land redistribution, and other redistributive measures such as reparations.

Though admirable in some left circles, the state-centred politics of Abahlali Basemjondolo appeared questionable on their stance on private property, as well as their intellectual freedom from white liberals. Either way, whether they targeted state owned, or private land for occupation, brutal responses from anti-land invasion units seemed likely to follow in a moment of armed neoliberal triumphalism. The targeting of state-owned land for occupation seemed insignificant in resolving the South African land question. It seemed to sway attention away from private property. It was also in tune with white conservative reasoning embraced by the DA, for example when they stated: "The DA government will focus on underutilised state-owned land for land reform projects" (DA 2024:36). On this note, and in addition to advocating for fire armed self-protecting families, the DA made it clear in its 2024 election manifesto that they would introduce "legislation to criminalise and prevent orchestrated land invasions" (DA 2024:23). That seemed to be in the DA's undying spirit of protecting private property, and reimagining a neo-colonial white settler state. Well-equipped with a critique of Israel's genocidal actions, and the nature of the Israeli neo-colonial white settler state, the ANC needed to re-examine the white landed elite on its shores, to lay bare their politics, and possible shared white settler politics with Israel. It seemed that intelligentsia would potentially reignite the ANC's revolutionary spirit towards resolving the South African land question.

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The South African traditional authority system and its influence on domestic politics

Sienna Molepo¹

Introduction

The Amadiba Crisis Committeeⁱ (ACC) held a rural community indaba in Xolobeni, Eastern Cape, on 19 April ahead of South Africa's national elections in May 2024. It is not surprising but contradictory to academic arguments that traditional leaders were recognised and incorporated into the governance system in post-apartheid South Africa by the ruling party for the influence they have over the rural vote (Ntsebeza, 2005; Van Kessel & Oomen, 1997). The rural constituency of Xolobeni organised the election indaba without the involvement or participation of their chief. Leaving open the question of the supposed influence of traditional leaders on the rural electorate. Instead, as part of the rural electorate, the ACC invited all political parties standing in the national elections to come and argue why people should vote for them. In the same instance, the ACC presented their demands, and their top three out of eleven are (i) protect communal land, (ii) no traditional leaders in business deals bring back their dignity, no selling of our communal land, and (iii) stop the new Bantustan laws.

Their demands are in light of rural land struggles across the country in the former Bantustansⁱⁱ, mainly rural areas with large deposits of mineral resources. Communities have been fighting against the collision between the government, chiefs and mining companies. Chiefs have been incremental in signing land deals worth millions of rands with mining companies without the consent of communities. Not only that, but the proceeds from the mining deals do not trickle down to benefit community members. Instead, the elites, politicians and chiefs are the primary beneficiaries of these mining deals. These issues have, in turn, led to a strain in relations between the chiefs and their constituencies and between rural

constituencies and the ANC government as it continues to push for new laws to strengthen traditional leaders' powers over the control of communal land. The ACC's approach to the oncoming elections, to directly engage with political parties and bargain for the protection of their land rights with less chiefly roles with regards to land control, is painting a particular character of the rural people than how they were often conceived as passive and easily influenced by their traditional leaders.

This short piece interrogates whether the traditional authority system can be a vehicle of progressive politics and social transformation in South Africa. It argues that the system of traditional authority has remained like its colonial predecessor. This authoritarian institution has failed to transform into a democratic institution and has instead accelerated the abuse of power over the control of communal land and proceeds generated from mining investments. This replication or continuation of the past has also sworn tense relations between traditional leaders and the rural constituency and hinders progressive politics in the rural areas. This article draws analysis from academic papers, media articles and press releases.

Influence of traditional leaders on the rural electorates

Intellectual debates about the role and compatibility of the traditional leadership system in the political system of democratic South Africa are conflictual. Democratic pragmatism scholars argue that the institution's colonial accreditations and hereditary leadership positions are incompatible with democracy and human rights principles (Ntsebeza, 2005), particularly freedom and the right to choose the political system to live under. The other school of thought, the organic democracy,

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does not see the traditional leadership system as a hindrance to democratic ethos but rather considers the institution as a governance system "that fulfils different needs towards people who understand more than one type of democracy" (Sithole & Mbele, 2008). The system is viewed as filling a governance gap that is considered to be missing under conventional democratic frameworks. In the last 30 years of democracy, academic research has focussed on the role of traditional leaders on land control, abuse of power by traditional leaders, grassroots struggles by rural communities against the authoritarian nature of the institution and corruption allegations over mismanagement of community funds. Findings have painted a picture that the pragmatism democracy scholars had initially raised alerts on earlier in the debates.

The democratic state's move to recognise traditional leaders post-apartheid was the result of political pressures on the ANC by traditional leaders, particularly the Inkatha Freedom Party's (IFP) lobbying for traditional leaders to be incorporated into the governance and political system during the political transition in the early 1990s (Ntsebeza, 2008; Oomen, 2005). Faced with threats of political unrest in the rural areas and the ANC's weak position over the rural electorate, the party compromised and recognised traditional leaders in the constitution of South Africa, but there was no clear definition of their role in the political and governance system. According to Ntsebeza (2005) the ANC had envisioned a more ceremonial role for the traditional leaders, however, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africaⁱⁱⁱ (Contralesa) traditional leaders lobbied for a more defined role with powers over control of communal land. Pressure mounted on the ANC government towards the third democratic elections of 2004 when traditional leaders continued to lobby for power and threatened to sway the rural vote against the ANC if their demands were not met. The government passed the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act 41 of 2003 (TLGFA) in a rush to appease

traditional leaders and secure the rural vote (Ntsebeza, 2008). Although the TLGFA defined the role of traditional leaders in the governance of rural areas, it did not give them power over the control of communal land. To this end, the chiefs continued to lobby for legislation strengthening their power over land and rural people. In 2004, the government passed the Communal Land Rights Act no 41 of 2004 CRLA, which vested ownership of communal land in traditional councils that were to be led by the chiefs. Rural people and civil society organisations resisted the CLRA as the entrenchment of Bantustan boundaries (Claassens, 2014). The fight was taken to court and the constitutional court repelled the Act as unconstitutional on the basis that rural people were not fully consulted in the public participation process. Nonetheless the ANC government continues its effort to strengthen the power of chiefs over control of land formally.

Berry (2018) argues that even though academic debates have associated the ruling party's alliance with traditional leaders to their perceived influence over rural voters, there is no empirical evidence to confirm that. Of course, the ANC's voter support in the past elections has been boosted significantly by the rural voters in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, Northern Cape, Free State and KwaZulu Natal to some extent. Despite the ruling party's rural voter support having declined over the last few elections, the fall in support has not been that significant (besides in KZN) because rural voter support has remained high for the ANC (refer to Table 1). However, that cannot necessarily be attributed to traditional leaders' influence. Ntsholo (2019) argues that the political parties have misguided beliefs that chiefs "are the gateways" to rural voters. There is no concrete evidence to cement that argument. Contrastingly, empirical evidence based on rural people's struggles against authoritarian traditional leadership systems that position traditional leaders as landlords over rural people reveal the disgruntlement of rural

people over the role and powers of chiefs if anything.

Table 1: Voting Patterns for the ANC from 1999-2019

Province	Percentage				
	2019	2014	2009	2004	1999
Limpopo	75.49	76.60	84.88	89.18	88.29
Mpumalanga	70.58	78.23	85.55	86.30	84.86
North West	61.87	67.39	72.89	80.71	78.97
Northern Cape	57.54	64.40	60.75	68.83	64.32
Eastern Cape	68	70.09	68.82	79.27	73.80
KwaZulu Natal	54.22	64.52	62.95	46.98	39.38
Free State	61.14	69.85	71.10	81.78	80.79
Gauteng	50.19	53.59	64.04	68.40	67.85
Western Cape	28.63	32.89	31.55	42.25	42.07

Votes for the ANC, IEC 2019 National and provincial elections results Dashboard

As many others have observed, the ANC's strong rural voters' base in the rural provinces can be linked to the party's liberation struggle and how rural people, especially the elderly, associate the party with liberation and freedom from the apartheid regime (Acharya & Anders, 2024). There is often a fear in the elderly that voting for opposition parties will reverse the country back to apartheid times and hence the continued support for the ANC despite the shared disgruntlement with high unemployment, poverty levels, load shedding crisis, increase in crime, rampant corruption within party members etc. Regardless of those challenges, many people associate social welfare services such as social grants, RDP houses, free education, free health care and school feeding schemes to the ANC government hence the continued rejection of right wing political parties. That being the case, the idea of traditional leaders having a strong influence on voter patterns could be far-fetched.

The political strategy of appeasing traditional leaders to attract rural voters by the ruling party and opposition parties should be viewed as contributing to the failure of the post-apartheid state to democratise rural areas. Mainly because "very few political parties seem to have invested time to understand the depth of the problems faced

by rural people" (Ntsholo 2019). Meaning that they are not in touch or choose to ignore pertinent issues in rural areas, particularly the need to democratise rural areas and to confront the authoritarian role of traditional leaders. Therefore, the political strategy to attract rural voters portrays a lack of appreciation of the particular struggles faced by the rural people (Ntsholo, 2019). Another key issue relates to the co-optation of traditional leaders into the political system of the post-apartheid state where they collude with bureaucrats and elites to undermine democracy (Berry, 2018). This has led to a situation where the National House of Traditional Leaders (NHTL) and Provincial House of Traditional Leaders (PHTL) have been vocal in lobbying for the strengthened power of traditional leaders over rural people and land.

Struggles over control of communal land and tense relations between rural people and traditional leaders

At the centre of political struggles in the former Bantustans is ownership of communal land and the government's push to vest ownership in traditional leaders, as well as the nature of traditional leader's power over land and people. From the early 2000s the government has been introducing pro-traditional leadership laws that intend to strengthen traditional leaders' power, and the rural people have been contesting such laws. The challenge is against state-entrenched

customary law which vests ownership of communal land in traditional leaders and that is in contrast to actual living customary law of these communities. For example, the #StoptheBantustan laws campaign led by rural communities and civil society organizations such as the ACC has been fighting against the reproduction of apartheid Bantustan laws that entrench Bantustan territorial boundaries. The campaign is also targeted at other anti-democratic laws that reinforce colonial notions of customary law (Stop the Bantustan Campaign, 2022). As a matter of fact, it is not opposed to customary law or traditional leadership but seeks to enforce traditional leadership system which is accountable to the people, thus also reflecting the living customs of the people (Stop the Bantustan Campaign, 2022).

The #StoptheBantustan laws campaign and other related rural people's resistance to the Bantustan laws such as the Traditional and Khoi San Leadership Act no 3 of 2019 (TKLA) and the Traditional Courts Act no 9 of 2022 (TCA), comes in the midst of ongoing conflicts over control of land and subjugation of rural citizens as subjects of the chief. In the platinum belt mining communities of North West and Limpopo provinces, traditional leaders have been at the forefront of signing mining deals with mining companies without the consent or participation of community members in decision making processes (Mnwana, 2019). Communities in the North West Province have been challenging the basis on which traditional authorities act as landlords over community's land, and those who can afford litigation have taken the issues before the courts and won. The courts have consistently emphasized the need for land right holders to be consulted, have meaningful participation in decision making processes as well as the right to consent or not consent to mining on their land. Nonetheless, that has not prevented traditional leaders from proceeding with these land deals or acting as landlords over communal land.

The anti-democratic dynamic of the institution extends to the lack of accountability over the use of community

funds. Again, extensive research in the platinum belt communities of Rustenburg shows intense distributive struggles between community members and chiefs (Capps & Mnwana, 2015; Mnwana, 2015, 2019; Mnwana & Bowman, 2022). This stems from the inadequacies of legislation to provide avenues for rural citizens to hold their traditional leaders accountable over community resources, particularly mining royalties (Claassens & Matlala, 2014). In the North West province all mining royalties of mining host communities are held in a Development Trust or famously known as D-account administered by the provincial government with the traditional leader of the relevant community as the signing officer for the release of funds. This system has seen the looting of millions of rands from community D-account by chiefs, their associates as well as politicians at the expense of communities who remain impoverished. The mining benefits are not trickling down to benefit community members. When communities demand accountability from their traditional leaders and request financial records information, traditional leaders such as the case of Bakgatla ba Kgafela use court interdicts to prevent community members from gaining information about the value of mining deals as well as threaten them from mobilising any meetings against the chief (Claassens & Matlala, 2014; Matlala, 2014; Mnwana, 2014).

These circumstances have led to hell-like conditions within which rural people are forced to live under, especially those who are vocal and speak out against the authoritarian like- decisions of their chiefs. This has in turn strained relations between traditional leaders and their rural constituency. Again the government has contributed to these tensions, with the enactment of legislation such as the TCA. The TCA creates a parallel and separate legal system denying millions of rural residents the right to "access mainstream court systems" (Claassens, 2021). Also another highly contested issue was the "no opt out clause" which means that rural people are deprived of their citizenship rights to freedom of choice but rather confined to

customary law court system as subjects of the chief. Rural land activists fighting against chiefly monopolistic control over land and non-accountability over community financial resources have argued that they are prone to become targeted by chiefs under the TCA for resisting chiefly abuse of power as they pose a threat to their authority (Pikoli, 2022). Once summoned before the traditional courts, rural people defined as members of that traditional authority are forced to comply with the summons and verdict. A verdict can even be taken without the person being present (Claassens, 2011). The traditional court can “revoke a person’s customary rights to land and even strip a person of community membership” (Claassens, 2011:189). There is already evidence of such forms of abuse by traditional authorities targeted against those who contest their authority. The Land and Accountability Research centre (LARC) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) had a case reported to them where the traditional leader kidnapped and assaulted community members who contested the legitimacy of his authority (Pikoli, 2022). This sums up the threat the traditional authority system poses to the democratic and human rights of rural citizens.

Rural people continue their struggle against authoritarian traditional leaders but also their struggle to be recognised as citizens of the democratic state with full citizenship rights that include the right to choose the system of governance they want to live under and protection of their land ownership rights. Their call is not per say for the total scrapping

of the traditional leadership system. It’s a call for the institution to reflect and be guided by the living customary law of the people, and have accountability mechanisms where rural citizens can hold chiefs accountable. As well as a call for laws that will limit the powers of traditional leaders over communal land in line with living custom, secure tenure for rural people and implementation of democratic governance systems and legal systems that does not deprive rural citizens of their full citizenship rights.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is argued that the traditional authority system in South Africa has failed to transform into a democratic institution and adopt democratic governance systems. Instead it has retained the nature of its colonial predecessor and cannot be a vehicle of progressive politics and social transformation in the rural areas. The nature of the current institution and its undemocratic system of governance is the result of the government’s notion of customary law, which is a replication of colonial state-entrenched customary law. As well as the continuing efforts by the ruling party to appease traditional leaders to secure the rural vote. However, that notion that traditional leaders have influence over rural voters is challenged as there is no empirical evidence to back it up. Furthermore, there is a need for an alternative political and governing system in rural areas amidst calls by rural people to be afforded full citizenship rights as everyone as well as protection of their land ownership rights.

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ⁱ A consortium of various villages under the Amadiba traditional authority in Mbizana Eastern Cape was formed in 2007 when an Australian mining company discovered titanium along the Wild Coast in South Africa. The community has been fighting against mining in their area for over a decade, pushing for their right to say no to mining.

ⁱⁱ Bantustans or homelands were established by the apartheid regime as part of their segregation policies, creating separate territories for black South Africans based on ethnic groupings. They were a mechanism for the removal of blacks from the South African political system.

ⁱⁱⁱ Traditional leaders across South Africa formed this lobby group in the apartheid era against the creation of the Kwandebele Bantustan. They became a lobbying group for the incorporation of traditional leaders into the governance system of South Africa as well as strengthening of their powers over communal land.

Considerations on the Concept of “Working People”

Lucas M. Koerner¹

The following is the modified text of an oral presentation given by the author at the Agrarian South Network Study Group on May 15th, 2024

Issa Shivji (2017) draws on Walter Rodney as well as his own empirical work on neocolonialism in Tanzania to develop the concept of “working people” as a new way to think about what Marxists had previously differentiated as entirely distinct classes and fractions, including “peasants and pastoralists, proletarians and semi-proletarians, street hawkers selling consumer goods and peddlers selling cooked food, operators and repairers in backyard workshops,” etc. The common denominator to these petty producers that constitute the majority of the population in peripheral social formations is that they are subject to primitive accumulation, which Shivji defines as a “process of surplus extraction by capital based on expropriation of a part of [their] necessary consumption” (2017: 11).

It is this objective situation of permanent primitive accumulation under neocolonialism that locates Southern working people as a “class against capital” (12). What these peasant, proletarian, semi-proletarian, and even petty bourgeois fractions have in common is that, in Utsa and Prabhat Patnaik’s (2016; 2021) terms, they are subject to income deflation, which refers to the diverse mechanisms through which Southern working people’s consumption is compressed in order to maximize the drain of value to the imperialist core.

This includes not just the exchange of labor-power below its value as explained by Ruy Mauro Marini’s (2022) concept of super-exploitation, but also “self-exploitation” whereby the mushrooming semi-proletarianized labor reserves are reduced to

price-takers supplying cheap wage goods and services. Following Paris Yeros, Praveen Jha, and the late Sam Moyo (2011), we should emphasize that self-exploitation together with non-market socially reproductive labor disproportionately done by working women effectively functions as a “subsidy” to the below-subsistence wages paid by capital, cementing what Samir Amin (2010: 86) calls the “globalized hierarchization of labor-power prices” that forms the basis for imperialist rent. These mechanisms coexist with the direct expropriation of land, labor, and their products that defined the more classical phase of primitive accumulation under colonialism.

But as Ali Kadri (2023: 172) shows, we should regard this cheapening of labor-power via the expropriation of consumption as a form of “structural genocide” that “extricate[s] the communities of the South from their lives.” In this way, the general law of capitalist accumulation, which continually expands the disposable labor reserves concentrated in the South (Marx, 1992 [1867]; Patnaik and Patnaik, 2016) is essentially the production of waste as premature death. We see this dynamic play out most dramatically in imperialist wars, sanctions, structural adjustment programs, and other means for controlling and ultimately obliterating the productive forces of peripheral social formations.

There’s perhaps no clearer illustration of the concept of “working people” than the Palestinian people in Gaza – as well as their allies in South Lebanon, Yemen, significant parts of the West Bank, etc. – whose heroic labor is popular armed resistance against US imperialism and Zionist settler colonialism together with continued social reproduction that sustains the people’s will and capacity to fight (Ajl, 2023). This is what Abu Obeida

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(2024) calls “the industry of the fighting human being, that Palestinian resistance fighter, whose will and determination to confront the killers of his grandfathers and fathers, the desecrators of his country, and the occupiers of his homeland’s soil, which no force on earth can stand against.”

Shivji’s formulation thus represents an important advance in what Fidel Castro called the “battle of ideas” (Yaffe, 2020: 69). Western Marxism has always rejected or ignored the revolutionary subjectivity of Southern working people. This is because it is, of course, a bourgeois class position that implicitly or explicitly embraces imperialism as a progressive, universally proletarianizing force that will supposedly herald the world revolution led by the Northern working class.

The concept of working people also helps to systematize comparable sociological terminology such as the “popular classes,” widely-used in the Latin American context, alongside the notion of “the people” – *el pueblo*, *o povo* – as a sociopolitical subject. Fidel Castro (1953) provides an exhaustive definition of “the people”:

When we speak of the people we are not talking about those who live in comfort, the conservative elements of the nation... [W]e mean the vast unredeemed masses... who yearn for a better, more dignified and more just nation; who are moved by ancestral aspirations to justice... who long for great and wise changes in all aspects of their life; people who, to attain those changes, are ready to give even the very last breath they have when they believe in something or in someone, especially when they believe in themselves... [W]e’re talking about the six hundred thousand Cubans without work... the five hundred thousand farm laborers who live in miserable shacks... the four hundred thousand industrial workers and laborers... whose future is a pay reduction and

dismissal... the one hundred thousand small farmers who live and die working land that is not theirs, looking at it with the sadness of Moses gazing at the promised land... the thirty thousand teachers and professors... the twenty thousand small business men weighed down by debts... the ten thousand young professional people... anxious to work and full of hope... These are the people, the ones who know misfortune and, therefore, are capable of fighting with limitless courage!

Here it might be helpful to distinguish between “working people” as a heterogeneous popular class formation and “*the* working people” as a revolutionary subject. In this latter sense, we might regard “the working people” as a counter-hegemonic bloc that, according to Gramsci, articulates the demands, desires, and indeed dreams of the popular masses (Dussel, 1985: 408-409).

The pending task is to further develop the concept of working people beyond the determinations of neocolonial primitive accumulation to understand the formation of popular subjectivity and consciousness, which are not superstructural epiphenomena but instead condition imperialist hegemony as a process of ideological submission (Kadri, 2023).

Contrary to the economistic trade union consciousness championed by Western Marxism, at stake here is the emergence of revolutionary nationalist structures of feeling (Williams, 1977) “moved by ancestral aspirations to justice” and “a more dignified... nation” that have been denied by centuries of imperialist enslavement. We’re preoccupied with what gives the masses “limitless courage” to confront the genocidal imperialist enemy and turn the world upside down, as we saw in the national liberation struggles across the Tricontinent and as we are witnessing today in Palestine and West Asia writ large.

Based on my own research on charismatic leadership in Venezuela and Latin

America more broadly, I think there is something to be said for the reciprocal relationship between the working people “believ[ing] in something or in someone” and “believ[ing] in themselves.”

I would argue that a defining feature of revolutionary and national-popular processes across the South from Egypt and Iran to Cuba and Venezuela is the mutual interpellation between the working people and the leadership that is one of them or becomes part of their communities, embodying their specific demands, programmatic aspirations, and emancipatory visions. While historically neglected by Marxists, charisma as a structure of authority (Weber, 1978) is deeply rooted in rural peasant communities typically woven together by reciprocal, non-commodity-based

obligations, most commonly via exchanging gifts (Amin, 1976; Karatani, 2014). It should not surprise us, therefore, that in the face of neocolonial primitive accumulation and generalized semi-proletarianization, Southern working people forge reciprocal if asymmetric bonds with their leaders as a collective means to resurrect lost pasts and prefigure liberatory futures.

In short, Shivji’s concept of “working people” serves as a promising point of departure for theorizing the shared structural position of popular class fractions under late neocolonialism. But it also invites us to examine the potential commonalities in the form and even the content of revolutionary subjectivities across the global South.

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Interview with the Arab intellectual Dr. Ali Kadri, 10/12/2023Translation by Haithem Gasmi¹

Dr. Ali Kadri, allow me to start our discussion with you about “Al-Aqsa Flood” from the moment of October 7th, 2023, and what happened then. First, how did you interpret October 7th – its context, dimensions, and repercussions on the region as a whole?

Personally, I didn't see October 7th as deviating from the historical context of Zionist and imperialist crimes in the region. The eradication of the region is a complete and ongoing process, and we must recognize this important issue here. The Zionist entity does not only target Palestine in its aggression, but the entire “Third World.” “Israel” is part of the imperialist power structure. Imperial power, as we define it, is the reproduction of accumulation and capital, and everything that goes with it. This means that imperial power and authority, reflected in institutions working to serve it and a mode of thought at the apex of the global ideological pyramid, were all created so that people do not see reality as it is. This means that the Zionist entity is part of the complex and fabric of international powers that serve the imperialist state, which continuously and systematically exterminates people, societies, and the environment.

The Zionist entity is a Western artificial creation. Its life is umbilically linked to Western colonialism inherited by America. Therefore, matters must be seen in their historical context. The entity partakes of the colonial ideology, which manifests through systematic extermination. The question that should be raised: How do we define systematic extermination and what does it mean?

Systematic extermination lies in reducing human life expectancy. Humans, who are supposed to live for a hundred years given technological advancements, contemporary knowledge, and available luxuries, along with the immense surplus production in the world, are found living only sixty years in West Africa, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Arab countries. This leads us to say that the process of systematic extermination means killing humans before their historically expected lifespan. Therefore, we see genocide as an integral part of imperialist thought and practice throughout history. The Zionist entity is an integral part of this structure. It practices killing in a time where genocides are internationally prohibited - due to the shift in power balances and the human heritage we gained in the past century - and the Zionist entity is the only one capable of direct extermination, let alone systematic extermination. Let us not forget that the Zionist entity was the one that would give nuclear weapons to the apartheid regime in South Africa, and it armed rebels against the people. Wherever there was a breach of human rights, we find it present.

Therefore, we are not facing an exceptional phenomenon outside this historical context, but rather a fragile instance of the broader phenomenon of power. Fragility does not only affect the Zionist entity alone, but the entire imperialist structure. Capital is fragile because it is imaginary capital. Fragility is not a characteristic of capital alone but affects all its scattered realities (such as weapons and other capabilities), as they too are imaginary and fragile. Moreover, the governing social

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In this text slightly modified from the original Arabic version, Al-Khanak presents the Arab intellectual and academic, Dr. Ali Kadri, in a dialogue about “Al-Aqsa Flood” and the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. We hope that this dialogue will be a humble contribution to the cultural and political discourse surrounding this war (the most significant event of this year in our region), and part of the development of an alternative Arab thought, which our thinker has long called for, and which we will contribute to through this dialogue.

The dialogue was conducted by: Editor-in-Chief of Al-Khandak, Bashar Al-Lakiss

relationship of the world, which imposes itself as the sole pattern for organizing life, one without alternatives, is also an imaginary and fragile relationship, as it is based on the foundation of capital.

This is what the resistance proved on October 7th, 2023, when it demonstrated its ability to expose this fragility by breaching the vast technological gap with the power of faith and militant belief resulting from the conditions experienced in the Gaza Strip. It showed that its capability to shift the balance of power. If anything, this indicates the cohesion of the resistance forces and their ability to overturn balances that should have been overturned long ago. These conditions should have been available for a long time. Unfortunately, the Arab regimes did not allow that.

Dr. Ali, within the framework of our analysis of the context of the event, if we go back to before October 7th - specifically to October 6th and before - we will find that the region was on the brink of a Saudi-Israeli or Gulf-Israeli peace, and there were those who said that the Middle East would become the new Europe, and that economic prosperity was coming to the entire region. Based on this, how can we understand capitalism as an accumulated waste of humanity and nature if October 7th did not occur?

Firstly, one must stop at the ideological standards that govern the thinking of those who speak with this logic. When we say that Europe is progress, and Europe is the phenomenon we seek to emulate, this is unparalleled ignorance. Why? Because Europe has been at the top of the capitalist hierarchy since its birth in the sixteenth century. As we know, the capitalist era differs from previous historical epochs in that its production is centered around profitability rather than social benefit. This is one of the fundamental pillars of organized social life in the capitalist era.

In the capitalist era, things are produced to be sold rather than for the benefit of the consumer. To produce things that are

marketable, you need to reduce production costs, and you need to pass on the costs of production to society. In your production of any commodity, you need to obtain trees, petroleum, minerals, and necessary inputs at the lowest prices possible. Nature does not exist in an independent external space but is inhabited by humans and peoples (meaning that nature does not exist without a social actor or an active entity, which is humans). Suppose, as capitalists, we need to reduce human and non-human costs and inputs in order to produce something. It becomes inevitable for us to waste humans before extracting environmental inputs, and it becomes necessary to strike out at humans and reform their minds in a way that serves capitalism.

In the capitalist system, humans are defeated in a dual-pronged military and ideological process. In capitalism, we first need to defeat humans militarily, and then in another stage, we need to defeat those who remain alive to offer their souls as sacrifices to the profitable production process without having to overtly coerce them. This means that we must create an ideology in which humans accept that there is no alternative to the exploitative capitalist profit-making system.

The result of this has been evident since the sixteenth century, since we entered this epoch, and when humans became surplus that could be wasted or dispensed with. The capitalist has no purpose for humans except to waste them in order to monopolize the resources that humans inhabit, whether they are forests, minerals, oil, or others, and to exploit them in a profitable production process or sell to another class in the progression in the production system.

In this case, humans become surplus, and the process of dispensing with them, destroying them, and repelling them becomes a productive process as well. This is why militarization was the first industrial operation. If the capitalist era is defined by the phenomenon of waged labor for humans, then the first wage laborers were the military who climbed aboard ships to obtain a portion

of the surplus value exploited as wages, and hence the wage system began.

Therefore, when it is said that Europe is civilized, we must not forget that Europe and America sit at the top of the decision-making pyramid in this wasteful capitalist profit-oriented system. Since the sixteenth century, Europe has wasted the lives of nearly 900 million people in its wars (400 million between 1500 and 1900, and 500 million in the twentieth-century wars). This means that we are talking about nearly a billion “wasted” lives. If we consider the environmental consequences, Europe has created environmental conditions and pollution to the extent that nature lacks the ability to reproduce humans. In just 150 years, Europeans have produced sufficient filth and pollution so as to destroy the planet. In this case, Europe will have created environmental waste, pollution, and filth that far exceed the useful things it has created, by multiple orders of magnitude.

We are experiencing daily genocides thanks to the West, and children under the age of ten are dying of hunger while the planet produces enough food for 12 billion people. This is a striking phenomenon. We are facing surplus production and social killing at the same time, due to the law of value that distributes resources and imposes human death. Killing humans has become an end in itself within the production process. The West sends armies as wage laborers and sends NGOs to prepare the ground for them, and all of them are wage laborers whose ultimate goal is to continue the process of killing humans. This is the major industry: it is the industry of waste, the industry of killing in its purest form. In every commodity you consume, there is a wasted workforce. While the energy of a worker is wasted in African forests to produce Coca-Cola, there is an imaginary collected capital other than that associated with the annual profit cycle. When you pay a dollar for a can of Coca-Cola, you will find that you are not actually paying a dollar, but you are paying other money instead of the waste resulting from throwing plastic into the sea, instead of environmental pollution, instead of your compromised

health due to its health effects and resulting diseases, and instead of the war taxes that were part of the entry of Coca-Cola into the market and the poverty resulting from these wars. All these bills are paid by society from its lifespan, and thence comes the profitability of Coca-Cola.

Therefore, when they talk today at COP28 about the environment, for example, and the need to stop pollution and save nature, this issue will remain incomplete unless we talk about stopping profitability, which is the basis of waste. The issue here is somewhat complicated because profitability is not a condition for stopping waste unless we address the issue of private property, which is the main reflection of capital and its main face. Private property does not mean individual ownership (houses, cars, and other personal belongings), but it means ownership of the means of production (factories, banks, etc.). Here, we are talking about private property that leads to excluding people from food, drink, and social security. Private property is a social relationship and not a thing, and we are talking about it as a relationship that excludes people from the social product, the product of social labor.

Humans are social beings and work is the sum of social relations, meaning the sum of the historical conditions that produce it. When a person goes to work, they utilize what has been invested in the production process through society. Society is the producer with all its categories, including the unemployed for physical reasons. All of these are intertwined social relations in a real phenomenon. When we talk about exploitation, we are talking about shortening the life of society through structural annihilation. Structural annihilation is a form of exploitation, but it is much less exploitative than the wasteful exploitation resulting from war. Therefore, what “Israel” or the Zionist entity is doing in the region and specifically in Gaza is primarily related to the rate of profit that capitalism will reap if “Israel” were to prevail in the future. However, it will not prevail because it is part of the imaginary composition of capital, and the world must, at some point, realize – given

the imbalance of power – that “Israel” is a paper tiger.

In a conversation three years ago, you told me that the Zionist entity is the driving force behind contemporary imperialism, but today, after “October 7th,” we are witnessing a shake-up in the image of “Israel” on the international stage. I am unable to determine the meaning and dimensions of this shake-up. Is it a shake-up of “Israel's” position in the imperialist system, or is it a shake-up of the entire imperialist system that we see manifested in “Israel” today?

The reality is that the international situation is changing. There has been a Russian victory against NATO in Ukraine, and there is the primary victory of the Third World: the rise of China. The main strategic issue for the West lies in removing China from the map, as China is the giant or the dragon that has returned to the international stage. China is part of Stalin's project for the Soviet East when Stalin wanted to extend the Soviet Union to the East. The success of the Chinese revolution was not disconnected from this legacy, which openly declares, “We are against the West.” The people's war waged by China in the past, whether in the Korean War or in the war against Japanese colonialism, was a war of the type we are living in Lebanon and similar to the resistance practiced in Gaza and Palestine. The people's war has always been intertwined with the paths of development and weaponry (meaning there is no development without weapons and no weapons without development). Therefore, the peasant was a fighter in the people's war. However, the modern people's war waged by China against colonialism today lies in penetrating international processes and spheres of circulation, and endogenizing technology. China now possesses many technological capabilities able to challenge the West (although in specific projects), as the West's historical superiority was due to technological reasons. Technological superiority was never due to the intelligence or uniqueness of one nation or another, since technological machinery is not a historical

actor. Reading historical development through the technological product alone is somewhat objectifying because we cannot understand social progress through the object itself but through the social actor as a composite of material and historical actor, meaning it is a social relationship. The historical action or historical social relations enabled the West to monopolize scientific and technological superiority. Furthermore, the historical action in preventing development in its environment and its victory over others is the reason why science and technology receded in those regions.

Of course, we should not forget the resilience of Iran and Russia, which have been achieved thanks to China's penetration of the blockade imposed by the United States on many of these countries. Perhaps China did not directly break the blockade, but it established significant trade relations and agreements that enabled many countries to rise and challenge it.

So, China has broken through, or better, ruptured the imperialist model. It has done so as a sovereign state, practicing various forms of warfare against imperialism, starting with its ability not to be uprooted from the international economic cycle, then its technological superiority, and finally its assistance to developing countries and besieged nations by breaking through imperialist blockades. This is an update to the concept of people's war. In my opinion, China's supremacy has had its repercussions on the international market and on the global stage everywhere. One of the repercussions of this transformation was the victory of anti-imperialist forces in different places and contexts.

What I want to say is that the shaking of the image of “Israel” is inevitable. That's because “Israel” is part of the structure of capital, and since capital is an imaginary matter as we have said, the mere collapse of this illusion will cause its imaginary power and all its effects to fall. It is not necessary to defeat this illusion with weapons, but it depends on the awareness of people first and foremost. Once people see that “Israel” is an illusion and weak, being part of a fictional

structure, “Israel” will fall. Our weakness lies in the inability of people to see the weakness of “Israel.” “Israel” is a strange entity in the region, and even its people know that they are mercenaries of global capitalism, recruited to strike out at Arab and Islamic peoples. Indeed, this is an acknowledged fact.

Did the image of “Israel” shake in this battle? I want to say that it did shake, indeed, and in several previous battles. And in every upcoming battle, the image of “Israel” will shake. This image should have been shaken before, but due to the lack of capabilities and the alignment of a significant portion of people claiming resistance with the official Arab regime, all of this led us to bring defeat upon ourselves instead of victory, even with the presence of weapons.

If we want to connect “Israel” to the issue of militarization, it's important to note that militarization and weaponry are always linked to oil and primary resources. However, today it seems like we are experiencing a moment of transition from the modernity marked by concrete things like oil, aviation, and the military to a different modernity that deals with data, the environment, and other issues. It's as if the issue of militarization is not clearly defined in our new modernity – or let us say that we are facing two models of modernity: one based on hard power and another relying on softer power. So, are we facing two modernities, or are we facing one modernity with two logics?

These are terms used by the prevailing or dominant imperialist ideology. We shouldn't use these terms (soft power, hard power, etc.). Power crystallizes according to power balances and the goals of capital, but military power has always been the primary power. When you defeat the world militarily, you can then impose intellectual defeat on it. For example, we are an intellectually-defeated nation. Foreign military camps, in addition to NATO and its weapons on our land, make us migrants to the North, while we witness a fundamental migration of wage laborers/military personnel to the South.

These individuals uproot our resources, including our human resources. So, when they say stop migration to the North, we should respond by saying stop military migration to the South, so that migration to the North stops.

In summary, we should think in a different way. The primary power and violence are the basic actions in all imperialist power practices. If peoples are not struck and defeated “once, twice, three times,” the capitalist machinery won't be able to operate. Thus, if we examine our history, we find that there isn't a stage where our peoples haven't been struck multiple times, and efforts haven't been made to defeat them under Western military and technological superiority. Therefore, whenever there is any disruption in international balances, everything under this “total regulator” will rise to regain its strength to live fully. Thus, humanity reclaims its wasted life and becomes capable of living its natural life under less arbitrary and militarized conditions.

Can we understand, from here, the difference between the right-wing and left-wing in Israel as two different directions mainly focused on the share and mechanism of extracting the surplus value of labor from the peoples of our region?

In this production process, “Israel” constitutes the address of the perpetual war on the peoples of our region which is the cornerstone of the accumulation process because when you start the production process, you must seize oil, copper, and humans, and you must eradicate humans. The first thing you do in extractive economies is to extract human life, which is not usually mentioned in political economic literature. As a capitalist, you must extract human life first before extracting anything else. Therefore, the price of extracting oil from the Arab region was very high for us as peoples, and one of its prices was the existence of the Zionist entity, which played a keystone role in securing the extraction of resources from this region. Unfortunately, human life was at the top of these resources.

Capitalism wanted to cheapen the lives of people in our region so that it could have a price equivalent to it.

From here, the funds come to “Israel” to carry out this task in the region, and this is the basic industry in “Israel.” When they tell you that “Israel” manufactures food or technological products, they overlook that “Israel” manufactures destruction/death, which is the basis for determining value in the economic process. To determine value, human life must be wasted. When his life is diminished in terms of his potential in working throughout a life he could have lived, the difference between the life he lived and the life he was supposed to live is the rate of surplus value that capitalism seeks to obtain.

There is a note, Dr. Ali, that capitalist entities are always more brutal, from “Israel” to capitalist entities in Eastern Europe, not to mention the pro-Western regimes in Latin America. We always find in “border regions” between the center of global capitalism and the peripheries, right-wing systems. Is it because the right is the most brutal, or less questioning in extracting surplus value from the peripheries?

Capitalism is not a material entity but a social relationship. Let's say it is a historical stage where global capital rules. Here, we cannot appreciate or say that one part of it is worse than another part because it is a comprehensive relationship interconnected with each other. It tries to balance here and there to remain the dominant relationship in the accumulation process. The accumulation process is the relationship of reproducing humans from day to day (it determines how society operates to sustain its ability to live). Therefore, there is no “good” capitalism and “brutal” capitalism; it is one relationship with multiple facets.

Let me express my question differently: Does the identity aspect of it escalate more and more in areas of tension, at the peripheries?

For these individuals, they usually have a specific function. They are homogeneous with the main bloc of capital in the

commodity-based ideology they carry within them. The commodifiers, or those who adopt the commodity ideology, are the class most aligned with capital because they are a fundamental part of it. When this class moves to the peripheries, due to its connection with Western capital, it becomes more ruthless in preserving its gains because it finds itself in a position of clear betrayal that makes it ostracized from its community. This class does not feel betrayal when it says it is against Palestine and against the liberation of peoples; rather, it speaks based on the logic of power, even in its discourse about bringing democracy to the world. However, if others outside the white ethnicity speak with the same logic, they will appear as if they are outside the flock.

Despite the coherence of your theory in the general sense, there is a problem in our inability to read the West except as a single whole. Today, there are movements in the West opposing its policies, expressed by a new middle class transcending nations and borders. Where does this class or segment fit into your interpretive framework?

The peace movement in the West has existed for a long time, at least since before World War I. However, when we look at capital, which has several determinants, we define it as an relationship based on exploitation, involving public and private production on one hand, and on the other hand, marked by its ability to socially differentiate people. Although capital is imaginary, it is based on people's perception of themselves and each other according to ethnic and sectarian divisions, without people exerting pressure on each other. This exploitation of public production for private gain forms its basis. There is a third aspect, which lies in the structures created by capital. Its structure always consists of a consumer and a consumed. In Southern countries, we have a structure based on the shoulders of a world consumed for the benefit of the North, and the issue here is not purely geographic. When we talk about a Northern structure and a Southern structure, we are talking about capital's ability to keep a portion of the

working class in the North complicit in imperialistic rent or the gains from exploiting the South. This relationship perpetuates the ability to constantly supply people with a portion of the war spoils plundered by the North from the South.

It began in this way in the sixteenth century and continues to this day. Therefore, there is a deep homogeneity between these categories and capital. Since the ideology of capital is the ideology of commodities, it holds the dynamics of commodities as necessary for the market. The purpose of commodities is to be sold and to generate profits, and their importance lies in providing the producer with an indicator of the profitability of the labor employed in the profit-making process (whether the profit was sufficient or not) according to market logic. Therefore, the law of value is influential in the process of resource distribution through the indicators and symbols that the producer takes from the market.

I won't delve too deeply into political economy, but what I want to say is that there is a capitalism that governs the world today, and it embodies the commodity. The capitalist individual in it sleeps and wakes up thinking only of profit and the market, becoming himself a commodity with his logic of thinking. And because the commodity does not feel, does not sense, and has no ethics, and because war is what strips the product from its basic source (the farmer and the worker) from the countries of the Third World, every ethical aspect of capitalism becomes centered on war as a necessary idea. This is because it maintains the lifestyle of this class in the North, and this justifies their constant assertion that they are compelled to strike the South. In other words, they are saying that we must preserve the wasteful consumerism that dehumanizes both people and the environment, even if we destroy the planet in fifty years and deplete its resources. We have the "right to war" to maintain our way of life. This is a new pattern of war philosophy that differs fundamentally from what came before. In the past, there was no justification for the idea of a just war, but today we live in a modernity where the

concept of war and its "justice" is based on the preservation of my lifestyle. It is then my right to take the life of another for the sake of preserving my standard of living, and this is the essence of commodity thinking.

Therefore, in conclusion, we understand that the global solidarity movement with Palestine, which some expect to herald a new solidarity consciousness, will not be able to accomplish its mission in the face of the strong grip of global capitalism on people's consciousness.

In the "Third World," and particularly in our Islamic world, protests mean nothing, and boycotting goods doesn't truly affect capitalism. What does affect it is the shifting of political balances. When your currency, wealth, and all your riches are tied to Western banks and the dollar, you are effectively living in an imperial bubble, and your protests become mere affirmations of the bubble in which you exist.

The process of struggle must realize that these protests mean nothing. So, how do Arab and Islamic peoples bear their responsibility towards themselves? Is it through protesting and boycotting? No, these actions mean nothing. They must bear their responsibility in a much larger way because violence is the primary factor, and Western ideological control and its tools (educational systems and NGOs) are essential elements in the imperialist production process. Without confronting violence and without boycotting the ideological instigators who created this debt-centered ideology, for example – which is an illusion of a bigger illusion which is capital – enslaving peoples and shortening their lives to increase accumulation and surplus value, your boycotts and protests have no meaning.

When things reach this point, Arab and Islamic peoples will realize that their task is much greater. When the leadership of the resistance says that our people must bear their responsibility, it goes beyond the issue of protesting and boycotting, and beyond passively watching TV, which drains their spiritual and moral essence, without any organizational action capable of shifting the

balance of power within these societies to expel the West with its ideology and military force, and all those who follow it. Therefore, I find the crisis to be a crisis of thought, and a crisis of alternative thought. There is an absence of an alternative for thought based on Western liberal thought, which has polluted the thinking of Southern peoples.

Your words lead me to the last question about the Arab left: Where is the Arab left today considering what is happening?

Those who sow will reap. The weakness and frailty of the Arab street are the result of intellectual weakness. The war of ideas is the cornerstone of the confrontation, and if we do not possess an alternative ideology that removes the illusions from capitalism in a way that completely changes the face of the region and shifts the balance of power in these countries, what are we doing, in reality? Our Arab reality has immense capabilities for production, imposing alternatives, and imposing conditions on behalf of our peoples in the international trade exchange process, and canceling Western settlements, that essentially colonize thinking, from universities and thought processes. However, the problem lies within the entire global left, not just with us.

The West has realized the danger of the Left as the source of many new ideas that could undermine its influence. Therefore, it has undermined the left through projects to buy off leftist movements and revolutionary thought, with many paid agents, especially among academics. I consider it a blessing for our peoples that academics do not lead the people and the revolution, or else the situation would have been dire for us. You are talking about a paid class that produces only what capital dictates.

Ultimately, where do you think we are heading after October 7th?

The Palestinian Arab Muslim and Christian people will inevitably triumph, and it is impossible for them not to prevail. This is not surprising to us. What is surprising is why we have not triumphed until today. What has delayed the victory? This may not be the final victory for our people, perhaps,

but it will lay the groundwork for greater victories in the days to come in the Arab capitals. If we do not work to achieve victories in these capitals in support of this triumph, we will undoubtedly squander this victory.

The victory of the Palestinian people in Gaza today has proven to the entire world that the Palestinian people are a formidable nation capable of making sacrifices. This is not new to Palestinians; they are part of our Arab and Muslim nations, as well as part of the nations of the Global South, which have always been capable of making sacrifices. However, progress has always been hindered by the consciousness instilled by Western liberalism and the crisis of intellectual alternatives, especially among the left, who have become unable to break free from illusions. "Israel" is weaker than a spider's web, that is a definite fact, and there is no debate about it; we must acknowledge it, indeed.

